

THE STORY OF THE BATTLE OF EDINGTON

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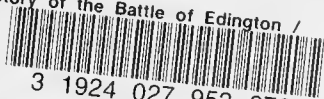
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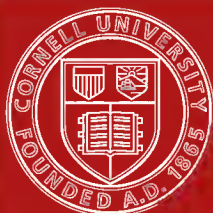
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OF
THE BATTLE OF EDINGTON.



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THE STORY
OF THE
BATTLE OF EDINGTON

BY THE
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PREFACE.

THE following account in detail of the Somerset Danish Campaigns which culminated in the Battle of Edington and the famous Peace of Wedmore in A.D. 878 is founded chiefly on previous notes contributed by myself to the *Proceedings* of the Somerset Archæological Society, vol. xlv (1900), under the heading of "The Quantocks and their Place-Names"; on my "Land of Quantock," published in 1903; and on "The Sequel to the Battle of Edington," an article contained in the *Proceedings* of the Somerset Archæological Society of 1907, etc. In company with other Somerset archæologists I owe a debt, also, to the original suggestions of Dr. Clifford as to the site of the Battlefield of Edington and the surroundings of Athelney. It is a matter of regret that English, and especially Oxford students of the Anglo-Saxon Period, have not treated the Alfred campaigns in the thorough and comprehensive spirit displayed by Dr. Reinhold Pauli and Dr. J. M. Lappenberg, or mastered the ancient geography of England with the care of the more modern Dr. W. Reinhard, of Leipzig. Must we trust to German research for light upon the dark periods of our Island History?

WILLIAM H. P. GRESWELL.

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The Story of The Battle of Edington.

A.D. 878.



ONE of the most distracting "Will-o'-the-Wisps" about the Battle of Edington was that flashed by William Camden, the great Elizabethan antiquary, (1551-1623) who, without any real proof, gave it out as a certain and well-assured fact that the Battle of Edington was fought in Wiltshire, an *idolon specus*—a preconceived fancy of his own. For the greater bewilderment of posterity does not the figure of a huge white horse adorn the flank of Bratton Castle, not far from the little village of Edington? The good folk of Wiltshire have wasted a great deal of sentiment over this white horse or "white mare's nest," for, in the first place, it is stated by Francis Wise in his "Further observations upon the White Horse" that the animal had been carved within the memory of people then living. It was certainly "new modelled" in 1778 by Mr. Gee, a surveyor, and another restoration took place in 1853. Nor, indeed, is the white horse of Bratton Castle the only horse in Wessex, as another is said to have been carved in Berkshire to com-

memorate the victory of Æscesdun or Ash-down. This, Camden said, was carved by King Alfred himself—another *idolon specus*.

We would not wish to say anything that would derogate too much from the authority of "the learned Camden," as he has been most justly called, but we do venture to question his place-names and his topography. The truth is philology as we understand it was rather at a discount in Camden's time and men who were considered scholars and historians on most points "ran amok" when they came to the derivation of words. Brightstowe, *i.e.* Bristol, Camden said was the "Bright" or Famous Town: the Cangi, a race of men called up and located surely in his own lively imagination, lived at Cannington and Kainesham (Keynsham) in Somerset and so bequeathed their name to these places! He thinks "Summer" may be at the root of Somerset, and he makes a very bad shot at the derivation of Dumnonia when he derives it from "Dun" *a hill* and "Moina" *a mine*. In the county of Somerset he certainly confuses Nether Stowey on the Quantocks with a Stowey on the Mendips. This is of course a trifling slip, as no great campaign hinges on the exact locality of the Stoweys, but we must be a little more assured about Edington and the fort, whither the Danes fled after their defeat. What is Camden's authority? Is the Wiltshire site acceptable simply because it is near Chippenham the Danish base? The exigencies of the Athelney struggle are against this. Or

is the Wiltshire Edington acceptable simply because it was a Royal Manor and given to Romsey Abbey? This is immaterial to the whole case.

Another "Will-o'-the-Wisp" of a particularly coruscating and attractive kind started by Camden again is that the "arx Cynuit" or Kenwith Castle, the scene of that notable fight which took place a few weeks before the Battle of Edington itself, was situated in North Devon and somewhere near Bideford. Antiquaries have taken up this scent very hotly, and there is near Bideford a gruesome place called "Bloody Corner" identified by Mr. Vidal in the *Archæologia* (vol. xv, p. 198) with the Danish fight. Indeed a place-name, "Whibbelstone" has been dragged in to do good service and is identified with Habbaston or Hubbaston, the burying place of the great chief Hubba, who fell "ante arcem Cynuit." To add to this picturesque confusion, Charles Kingsley, in his most popular novel "Westward Ho!" has introduced Kenwith Castle and Hubbaston on the North Devon site, following the conjecture of Camden.

The only possible appeal to those who still trust to Camden and place the Battle of Edington in Wiltshire, and the fight before the Arx Cynuit in North Devon, is to ask them to study more minutely the natural *terrain* of that most momentous campaign in A.D. 878, and to set the evidence, especially that which bears upon the smaller geographical details, once more before their impartial judgment as students.

The subject itself is a most fascinating one when we consider that after, perhaps, "The Battle of Senlac" and the victory of the Normans, the "Battle of Edington" comes next in national importance. It was an epoch-making event followed by the "Peace of Wedmore" which finally divided the Kingdom of Alfred from that of Guthrum, and presently led to the union and amalgamation of England. Athelstan, grandson to King Alfred, was able to inscribe on his coins "*Rex totius Britanniae*" instead of simply *Rex Angul-Saxonum*. Moreover the way was paved for King Alfred's great administrative and legal reforms for which up to A.D. 878 he had little leisure. Finally the victory of Edington meant the triumph of the Cross against Paganism. When at the Castle of Cynuit the Danish Raven, woven by the three sisters of Hubba, drooped and fell, the fiat went forth that Paganism and Pagan emblems should finally disappear. The font at Aller meant really a new birth.

If no other excuse may be found for reviving the old-world controversy of the Site of Æthandune (and no apology is really needed) still much may be made of the recent publication of old MSS. and Charters, hitherto concealed from public view. It is more than probable that neither Camden nor his successors ever read the original Charters of Athelney or of Muchelney, or, indeed, the piled up treasures of Wells Cathedral. But these have thrown unexpected light upon place-names in the very neighbourhood of King Alfred's last retreat.

We may be reading a Charter which, at first sight, seems to be uninteresting, but presently we light upon an old boundary such as "Toteyate" close to King Alfred's fort. What is this but the Saxon "outlook Island" and just that very place where the King looked forth anxiously time after time when fighting for his very existence in the marshes of the Parret. Toteyate is now Borough Mump.

Again in the old gift of Long Sutton,* made by King Alfred to Athelney, we chance across no less than four notices of a "*Herepath*" or Warpath in the original Saxon MS., leading from Athelney to what must have been strategic points in that narrowing field of action. In another Charter (Stoke-Courcy, A.D. 1100-1200) there is a Quantock *Herepath* running down to the river Parret, which from its very course must simply have been a *Herepath* linked with the centre of North Petherton Park and Forest. Not only this—but if we examine carefully the manors and properties left by King Alfred to his son Edward the Elder, we shall find a cluster of them round and in the vicinity of Petherton, Somerton, and Athelney. This throws light upon the phrase in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle that the King had the aid till then of only "that part of the men of Somerset which was nearest to Athelney" and of those, as Ethelwerd adds, "who were his servants and made use of the King's pastures."

* See Collinson's "Somersetshire," vol. iii, 197, also Athelney Register.

An old Ballad, again, in which the praises of King Alfred are sung and a dramatic version is given to the well-known story of the Cakes, actually mentions a place-name, "Newton Court," the very scene of the adventure.* This place-name is most valuable, because it points to the precise locality of the King's "latebræ" and, moreover, it appears as the administrative centre of the Forest and Park of Somerton and also of all the five Royal Forests of Somerset. Newton-Forestariorum, with a history most clearly traceable for centuries, is Newton Plecy or North Newton in the forest of Petherton. Sometimes the park of Petherton has been called Newton Park, and it was here that in 1673, King Alfred's jewel was discovered.† The late Professor Earle, although apparently he had never read this popular Ballad, conjectured in his Monograph on the Jewel that it was at this very place King Alfred led his precarious life, and cites a "North Newton" Charter granted by the King. We have just an insight therefore into the resources of King Alfred when still ranging the Petherton Forests and the adjoining marshes. There was fish and fowl and abundance of game, in the Royal Forest of North Petherton and North Curry, and what was still better, the stalwart band of West Country Foresters with those "men of the King's pastures" who stood by him un-

* See Appendix D, Thomas Evans' "Old Ballads" Vol. i, 1784.

† See "Forests and Deer Parks of Somerset" by Rev. W. H. P. Greswell.

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S. Wales

Severn Sea

Mat Holin

Stepholm

Selwood
Forest

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Carhampt
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Exmoor Forest

DORSET

Neroche
Forest

DEVONSHIRE

MAP OF
KING ALFRED'S CAMPAIGN, 878.

flinchingly at the end. Lastly the rummaging of old papers and charters certainly brings to light Cynuit Castle and gives us in King Alfred's immediate neighbourhood a place spelt Cynyz and now called Comwich, a key to the whole situation ; and it has also given us *Wykyngs pulle* on the Parret, close to Cynuit Castle, and a most salient feature in the last Danish attacks.

Further, it must be remembered that neither Camden nor his immediate successors had the advantage of studying the Alfred Campaign of A.D. 878 with the aid of a proper ordnance survey map drawn according to scale. Otherwise it would have been impossible for them as students of strategy to place Cynuit Castle at Bideford, or the Battle of Edington in Wiltshire. Either place is fifty or sixty miles distant from Athelney, and this in a straight line. Considering the rough nature of the ground over Dartmoor, Exmoor and the Brendons, the descent of Ubba at Bideford, if looked upon as a flank attack upon the fastnesses of King Alfred in North Petherton must have been absolutely purposeless. The distance was too great, the country too impracticable. Regarded as an isolated foray upon North Devon, not a particularly rich country then as contrasted with other portions, it was ridiculous. But surely the language of the A.S. Chronicle points to a concerted movement made upon King Alfred from all quarters. Lappenberg thinks that the Danes in 877 and 878 did combine forces and unite their efforts

to crush the King, and their plans were laid accordingly to hem him in.

This blockade was successful for, as we learn from the Chroniclers, King Alfred could only make *daily* excursions from his base. He was very straitly beleaguered. Yet, according to Camden and, we suppose, others, King Alfred, when he posed as a harper or as a "joculator" went almost alone and unattended to Bratton Castle or Chippenham to find out what his foes were plotting at their base, sixty miles distant. The journey itself would be far too long for the immediate purpose in view, which was to relieve the pressing blockade round Athelney and Glastonbury, not to attack his enemy's base far off.

Bratton Castle, too, as the refuge of the Danes after a battle fought at the Wiltshire Edington is absolutely inexplicable. It is again too far off Athelney and too near Chippenham, and the high ground is really on the direct line of King Alfred's advance from Selwood, if he ever did advance that way. It was a strange refuge for the Danes to take in face of defeat. Why did they not order their retreat to Chippenham their base, which was within sight? It would have been the natural and most obvious thing to do. Further, if King Alfred really won in Wiltshire why did he not make peace at Chippenham, the Danish headquarters, instead of at Wedmore, in the Somerset marshes? Everything points to a battle near his own straitly invested base at Athelney.

Lastly, there is the substantiating voice of local tradition which is heard more especially in the fen country round Petherton—legends and stories clustering round Newton Court as in the old Ballad. Mr. W. H. Stevenson in his edition of Asser underrates surely the value of local tradition. No doubt he was right in criticising sharply the myths that arose from Camden's theory of the site of Cynuit Castle at Appledore and in this desire to sift these identifications to the very utmost, we are at one with him. But the local traditions round Petherton and Athelney owing nothing to Camden and his successors are a different matter altogether. Athelney is the natural centre of action and also of tradition. As a boy, the writer of this paper has skated for miles over the frozen moorlands near Athelney: he has seen the land flooded again and again, and, quite recently, he has made a study of the bounds and metes of the Forest and Park of North Petherton—the Præ-Norman Saxon Forest linked with Somerton as a hunting centre. He has been brought into contact time after time with the old people of the place, and heard what they have had to say. One old man named William Woodland, who was born near Athelney and died there in his hundredth year, spoke of King Alfred as if he had seen and known about him yesterday. To see the old man "buffing withies," *i.e.* peeling them for baskets from the withy beds, and to hear his stories of the countless quantities of fish and fowl that once haunted these

meres, was like listening to some ancient "Son of the Marshes" speaking truly from the misty past.

Sir John Spelman says of the marsh level in his day "apud nos inclaruit" like Minturnæ amongst the Romans which sheltered the flying Marius.

Another old man, John Chillcott by name, who died in his ninetieth year, lived under the most suggestive hill of the Quantock ridge called Danesborough. He spoke of "the Denes" (not Danes, thus preserving the old pronunciation as in the *Foresta de Dene*) and described them as "hurd headed (red headed) men who beat ours in the war," and he used always to add in a somewhat low and oracular fashion "But the women-voak paid 'em out," an incident in the Danish campaign the writer has never quite solved, although there is room for a theory. Neither of these old men could read or write and they were genuine sons of the soil, their forefathers having been born and bred in the country for generations. A talk with rustics of this kind, led on gradually by those who know their ways and the manner of their expressions, must end in the conviction that they are not inventing. With the old generation the sanctity of the spoken word was great—far different from what it is now since the days of popular education, and what they said they believed. Mr. Cecil Sharp in collecting his store of *Folk Songs from Somerset* was surprised himself at their number, and at the fidelity with which

they were reproduced. It may be noticed that Danesborough on the Quantocks, the scene of Wordsworth's "Danish Boy," was always the place of legends. Under the heather-clad hill sounds of music were often heard, "as of a full band;" beneath its summit was a buried treasure or money field where marauders or invaders may have hidden their spoil. But more specifically not far from Danesborough was a tragic field, still called "Dead Men," where it is said a Danish fight took place and the blood flowed in torrents "to the first shuttle of the gate." This was in Over Stowey parish.

In Somerset, this trait of truthful relation has always been marked, and William of Malmesbury, himself a Somerset man, (cognomento *Somersetus*), who described Athelney Island evidently at first hand, writes thus of King Alfred, "The very places are yet pointed out by the inhabitants where he felt the vicissitudes of good and evil fortune." If this was so in the Thirteenth Century it continued to be the case many hundreds of years afterwards. Historic events evoked the spirit of the old minstrels, and so when Macaulay came to quarter the ground round Sedgemoor and heard what the people had to say about the battle of 1685, he too expressed himself as struck both by the number and weight of the stories and songs handed down from father to son. The Danish legends "stuck," as we naturally would expect, and in the oral traditions by "*Philantiquarius Britannicus*" in Stuart times and reproduced for all who wish to read

them in Peter Langtoft's Chronicle (Thomas Hearne 1727), we have yet another proof of this vitality. It is neither fair nor reasonable for the historian of dark periods to reject them.

From the written evidence at hand both in Asser and the Chroniclers it must be clear therefore that, towards the end, the campaign waged between King Alfred and the Danes, was confined to narrow limits. His means of offence got gradually less and less until it may be roughly said that all the Kingdom of Wessex over which he was master early in 878 was scarcely 40 miles long and 12 miles broad. From such a point as "King's Hill" on the South of the Quantock ridges, (a hill in Saxon times part of the Royal Quantock Demesne) the whole of his narrowed sovereignty can be seen in one *coup d'oeil*.

To understand how this came about, our glance must be directed towards the larger map of the country and to preceding events. Not to go further back than A.D. 875 we shall find that one part of the Danish invading host had, under Healfdene, over-run and mastered the whole region of the Northumbrians, and had even extended their ravages to the country of the Picts and to the Strathclyde. Another portion of the heathens under Gothrun, Osscytil (Osketellus) and Auvind (Amund) had come to Cambridge and had wintered there. King Alfred this year was not brought into contact with the Danes, apparently, excepting by sea, when, in some trifling naval engagement, he fights six of the enemy's ships, capturing one,

and putting the others to flight. It is not stated where this naval engagement took place but it is important so far as it proves that King Alfred had realised that the best plan was to trust to the wooden walls to keep out the invaders. This policy we know that he elaborated afterwards, and Sir John Spelman gives us a good idea as to how the King's "naves longæ" were constructed in order to fight with advantage against the Danes. The only way to keep England safe was to be able to sweep the seas outside as the great Blake afterwards taught his countrymen, when, instead of the pirate Danes, England had to deal with the Algerine corsairs who used to raid even the Severn Sea and anchor off the Holmes, the Danish perch centuries ago.

Suddenly in A.D. 876 "the oft mentioned army of the pagans leaving Cambridge by night entered the fortified place called Werham" (Asser), but we are not told how they reached this Dorset stronghold from Cambridge. We may assume that they intended, *more suo*, to keep their operations secret and make a surprise visit. Up to this date it does not appear as if Wessex had suffered very grievously from Danish invasions. The terror had hung over the land for nearly a hundred years, and according to the "Chronicon Fani Sancti Neoti" three ships "Normannorum" had for the first time touched at the Island of Portland in A.D. 789. But the terrible piratical outrages that gave occasion for that Church Synod held at London in A.D. 833, "pro consilio

capiendo contra Danicos piratas litora Angliæ assidue infestantes" were mostly those which affected the Eastern shores and, no doubt, London itself.

From a stray note in the A.S. Chronicle (A.D. 845) we discover that the Danes had found their way round Cornwall and up the Severn Sea. They made the mouth of the Parret their objective, probably knowing that by this route they could reach by far the richest and oldest shrine of Christianity in the kingdom, *i.e.*, the Sacred Island of "Ynys Witrin" or Glastonbury. In this project they were foiled by the united efforts of Ælstan, Bishop of Sherborne, Eanwulf Ealdorman of Somerset and Osric the Alderman of Dorset. This invasion took place before the birth of King Alfred and whilst his father Ethelwulf was still on the throne.

However this may be, it may be taken for granted that, whatever the fortunes of the neighbouring Kingdom of Mercia up to A.D. 876, the Kingdom of Wessex remained pretty free from formidable Danish inroads. Forays there may have been, but nothing in the shape of a prolonged occupation. If the Danes had really ever had their grip upon Wessex they would have sacked Glastonbury just as they sacked Croyland of which Ingulph gives us such a pitiable account. But Glastonbury, to use the phrase of Glastonbury's historian, William of Malmesbury, "*splenduit usque ad Alfredi tempus*" but then being destroyed by the Danes "*desideravit notos incolas.*"

We can assign the date of the ruin and destruction of Glastonbury fairly well by inference to A.D. 877-878. For what does King Alfred do when he learned that the Danes were quartered at Wareham in A.D. 876, a spot lying "in paga quae dicitur Britannice Durnqueir, Saxonice autem Thornsæta tutissimo terrarum situ" and also the abode of a Monasterium? He at once hurries to the place, invests it and forces the Danes to surrender, give hostages and swear that they would depart from Wessex. This looks as if King Alfred was lord and master of his own kingdom so far that he was able to dictate terms. Yet the Danes must have been securely ensconced at Wareham.

Sir John Spelman in his "Vita Alfredi Magni" observes that the usual plan of the Danes was to seize upon a strong position not far from their landing-place either "munitum vel munitioni idoneum," *i.e.* either fortified or suitable for fortification. In the case of Wareham they had evidently surprised a place that was a ready-made fortress. But in case they could not get this the Danes occupied a port that was precipitous "*fluvioque vicinum*" which they immediately strengthened with a *vallum*. Their encampments, Spelman observes, were always round, like ancient Cissbury (Chichester) and were provided with one gate which generally faced the river or estuary which they had invaded.

Such places were exactly suited to their tactics of pillage and plunder, and when they

had sufficiently devastated (expilaverant) a region, they decamped and went elsewhere. How some places suffered we may gather from a post-Alfred and Domesday account of Farnham, a Domesday manor in Hants which, in the time of Edward the Confessor, only paid tax on twenty instead of thirty Hides. "Sed Rex Edwardus ita donavit, causâ Wickingarum, quia super mare est." Those who know Poole Harbour and the Isle of Purbeck will realise at once how admirably suited Wareham was for the "sæpe memoratus paganorum exercitus" which had come thither from Cambridge. Yet, in spite of their strong position, both by sea and land, they were forced to surrender on conditions by King Alfred. Clearly the King was able to control and still govern with unquestioned sway Dorset and Somerset. The monks of Glastonbury might have trembled when they heard of the fate of the Wareham monasteries, but, so far, the Fosse-way was safe and they could sleep securely in their beds. Moreover, what was done in Mercia was up to this point inconsiderable, and the Severn Sea was safe.

We next come, in A.D. 876, to the invasion of Exanceastre or Exeter which was even more serious than that of Wareham. On a certain night, breaking their treaty and disregarding their oaths the Danes slew King Alfred's horsemen and from Wareham made their way "*versus Domniam*" i.e. to Devonshire. Asser indicates in his version the British and Saxon character of the population of Exeter when

he gives its alternative name in British of "Cairuisc" *i.e.* the town on the Eastern Bank of the Uisce or Exe River. In spite of this treachery King Alfred rode after them (for some of these Danes seem to have ridden through Dorchester to Exeter) but, unfortunately, he was unable to catch them up and his enemy there, as at Wareham, managed to reach the fortress and enter it.

The thought that just strikes one is whether the Kingdom of Wessex was altogether sound in its allegiance to the Saxon King, and whether amongst "The Waelas" of Exeter there were some, anyhow, who inheriting a rooted aversion to the Saxon Conquerors saw in the Danes an avenging hand wherewith to wipe out historic defeats and a thousand indignities. The Dumnonians at Exeter may have been divided in their allegiance to the "House of Cerdic." Exeter, as Mr. Freeman long ago remarked, was a town of two separate nationalities and one section of them, anyhow, may have swerved at a critical time. For the "Wealcynne," as King Alfred describes them in his Will, may still have felt that social and political ostracism that is the invariable sequence of national defeat. Thoughts of Geraint and of Arthur fighting their desperate battles with the Saxon may still have been present with a section of the Wealcynne.

However this may be, King Alfred was evidently strong enough to here again command the situation. The Danes "then delivered to him hostages as many as they

would and swore many oaths and observed the peace well." In the chronology of events given by Sir John Spelman the Danes promised to evacuate West Saxony, and returning to Mercia they divided the Province of Mercia between them "in mense Augusto" (A.D. 877). How the Danes found their way round to Mercia from Exeter we are not told but it must have been by the coasts of Cornwall and up the Severn Sea as they erected their huts at Gloucester. The Danes it may be observed had suffered severely this year from a storm at sea which had destroyed 120 of their ships off Swanage on their way along the South Coast from Wareham to Exeter. Although King Alfred had skirmished with the Danes by sea, it does not appear as if he had thought seriously of the defence of the Severn Sea, which, as the sequel shows, was the most vital part of Wessex.

The winter of A.D. 877 brings about a most surprising change in the fortunes of King Alfred. From his dominating position as King of Wessex he becomes a hunted fugitive accompanied by certain soldiers and vassals (*militibus et fassellis*) leading a restless and uneasy life in great tribulation amidst the woody and marsh fens of the district of Somerton. (*Summurtunensis pagæ. Asser*). All that he had to exist upon was what he could snatch openly or secretly from the pagans themselves or from the Christians who had bowed the neck to the Pagans. There were frequent forays (*irruptiones*) on his part and

many retreats, but none of the latter could have been conceived in the spirit and with the desire *pour mieux sauter*. These were the retreats of almost absolute despair. How can we account for this diminution of his power?

In the first place what happened in Mercia must have grievously affected him. The Danes there had set up a puppet of their own to reign, Ceolwulph, whom all the authorities combine in decrying as a worthless being.

Asser writes thus :

“By a most miserable arrangement the pagans gave Mercia into the custody of a certain foolish man, named Ceolwulf, one of the King's ministers, on condition that he should restore it to them, whenever they should wish to have it again : and to guarantee this agreement, he gave them hostages and swore that he would not oppose their will, but be obedient to them in every respect.”

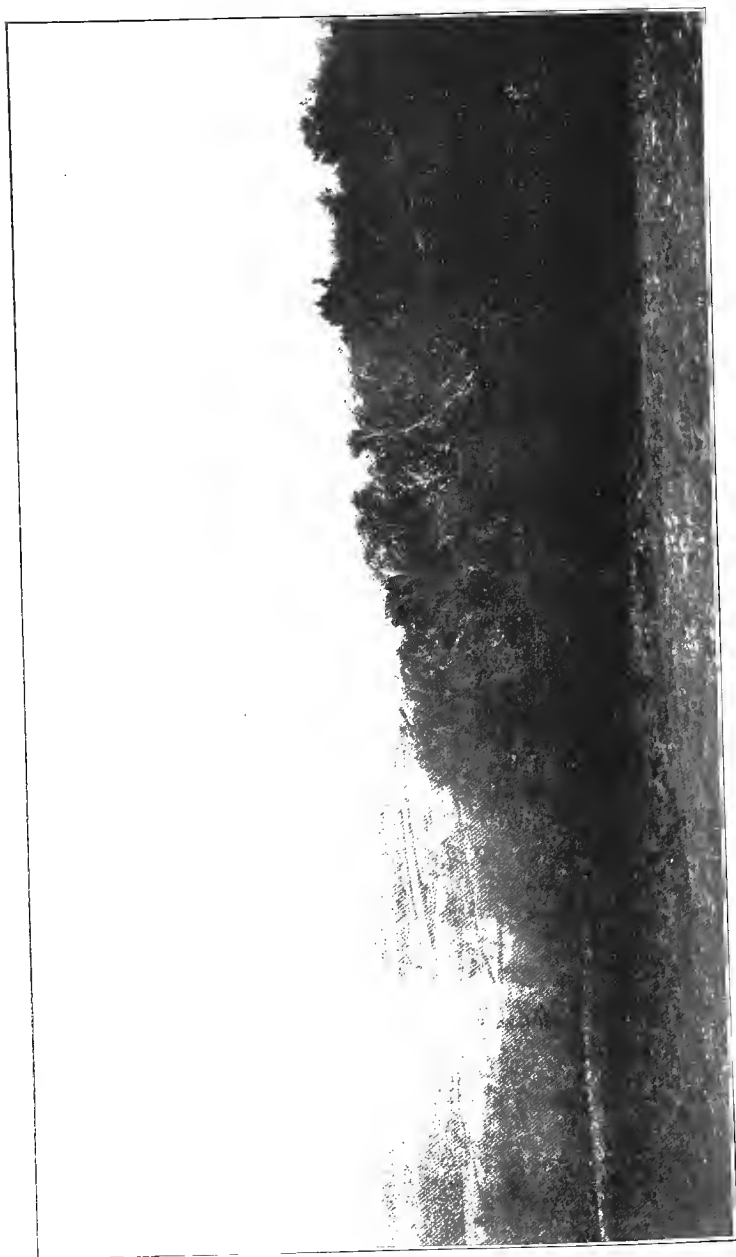
The influence of this titular King was all, therefore, on the side of the Danes. As Mercia with its fringe of the Severn Sea gave the Danes acting from Gloucester access to the heart of King Alfred's kingdom there is surely more in the defection of Mercia than appears at first sight. The Danes proceed inland either by way of Gloucester or Caer Brit (Bristol) and lay their hands upon the “Regia villa” of Chippenham.

Secondly, there is every reason to suppose that in their wider plans which covered the permanent occupation of Mercia, like North-umberland, the Danes were assisted by new

levies—Asser alludes in one passage to the overwhelming numbers of these northern invaders, for if you slew thousands of them, thousands would still appear. In the vision of St. Neot in Alfred's darkest day, and just before the battle of Edington, he is told not to despair "*propter multitudinem eorum.*" The Chronicler Huntingdon (1100-1150) puts the general position of affairs thus:—

"In the seventh year of King Alfred when now the Danes were in possession of all the Kingdoms on the Northern side of the Thames and King Halfdene was reigning in Northumberland—and the brother of Halfdene was in East Anglia, and the three Kings, Godrun, Osketin and Anwerd, were with Ceolwulf in Mercia—it seemed a disgrace to the Danes that King Alfred should still hold the land West of the Thames. The three Kings therefore came to Chippenham with a wonderful multitude of men who had lately come from Denmark covering the earth like locusts."

Apparently, after the occupation of Chippenham there was nothing to stop the Danish arms ever rushing and advancing Westwards both by sea and land in the Autumn and Winter of A.D. 877. To this period must belong the sacking and pillage of that sea-monastery Glastonbury; the occupation of Bristol and Bath and the conquest of the great Roman Fosseway which led from Bath to Ilchester,—that old Roman town close to Somerton. There are, of course, plentiful



THE PARRET MOUTH AND ERENT KNOLL.

rumours of the visits of the Danes to Bath and Bristol, and Camden says that these heathen destroyed two churches at Bath, but there is clearer evidence altogether of a notable struggle which must have happened about this particular time for the command of the Parret mouth. Just here the eye will fall upon the commanding position of Brent Knoll, 500 feet high, which dominates the whole country and still bears frequent marks of ancient escarpments. Below is the famous site of Battleborough, anciently spelt Batelberga in the old Glastonbury papers, and here was fought no doubt on a Glastonbury Manor the great fight that decided the fate of Glastonbury itself. In this fight, King Alfred would be defending Burnham, part of the old Saxon ancient Demesne.*

There are abundance of rumours also of Danish inroads, evidently belonging to this date, in the vicinity of the Axe and the lower end of Mendip where, at Uphill, the range descends to the ancient port of Uxella. The old inhabitants of this district handed down in Stuart times a story of how the Danes rushed up the tidal river Axe and anchoring near Bleadon drove all the inhabitants before them. All fled except one aged woman who through her infirmities was unable to run and could only crouch for shelter in a hiding-place.†

* See Collinson's "History of Somerset," also Peter Langtoft's Chronicle, vol. ii, p. 466, (Thomas Hearne, 1725), in which allusion is made to local traditions in Stuart times.

† Peter Langtoft's Chronicle, vol. ii, p. 476.

Presently as the marauding bands of Vikings disappeared, she had the courage to peep out and as she saw no one near she went to the boats and with an axe she found at hand, cut the ropes and cables and let the boats drift down the river seaward with the tide. The inhabitants seeing what had happened from a distance rallied, and awaiting the Vikings as they returned engaged them in battle and inflicted a terrible slaughter upon them. Still the Danes were paramount in this region and are supposed to have destroyed a monastery near Blaedon-Hythe not far from Axbridge, mentioned in old Charters and dedicated to St. Martin.* The fate of Glastonbury must have been decided by this time or, perhaps, it was trembling in the balance.

The question may be asked whether it is really at all possible from available historical evidence to fix with any degree of certainty the dates of these Danish attacks upon Glastonbury and upon the North Coast of Somerset and the mouth of the Parret. The answer is fairly obvious. In 845, the Danes did attack the mouth of the Parret but, as the A.S. Chronicle says, were repulsed by the Bishop of Sherborne and his allies. In the beginning of King Alfred's reign, A.D. 872, the Danes could scarcely have made a formidable raid upon the North Coast of Somerset and upon Glastonbury, as it is quite clear that King Alfred was strong enough from what has been said above

† Kemble's Charters, no. lxiii, c. A.D. 712.

to drive them both from Wareham and Exeter. After the Peace of Wedmore in 878 all these Danish inroads ceased to be really formidable. There is scarcely a Danish place-name ending in *by*, *thorpe*, etc., in Somerset and in Domesday "John the Dane" is mentioned thus as the holder of Yatton. Another family appears as Dacus or Deneis surviving in Sok-Dennis, but the Danes were conspicuous by their absence. Asser notes that there was a Danish monk at Athelney the only one of that race, but practically the Northmen were cleared out. At any rate they were so scarce that wherever one of them was found as a settler his nationality was given.

From John of Glastonbury we may infer that the Danes in Canute's time were very different from those in King Alfred's time, more than 220 years previously. Of course, after Ethelred's treachery the Danes swarmed over England as avenging foes (*Angliam hostiliter pervagabantur*). A party of them came to the gate of Glastonbury Abbey, known as the Hawete (*quæ Hawete vocatur*). This, we know, was the well known fence that ran round the Abbey, probably restored under S. Dunstan. Some of the Danes having heard of the sanctity of the place retreated lest they should provoke the wrath of the "Mother of Pity" and the other Saints whose bodies lay there. In King Alfred's time no such compunction would have occurred to Hubba's or Guthrum's men. However, even in Canute's

time there were found some who derided the sanctity of Glastonbury (*subsannantes*) and entered the sacred precincts. These were immediately struck with blindness by the Virgin but, because they repented, were soon restored to sight. Such was the gratitude of these Dapes that, desiring to make a suitable offering, they collected money amongst themselves and presented a cross of gold and silver, adorned with precious stones, to the old Church — "*veteri ecclesiæ*,"—meaning the Chapel of S. Joseph. King Canute himself visited Glastonbury afterwards and as patron of the Abbey granted great privileges (A.D. 1017) and confirmed all the old charters dating back to Centwine, Ina and the "incomparable Edgar." In the account of John of Glastonbury there is nothing to induce us to believe that then the Danes appeared in the guise of marauding Vikings, sweeping up the Parret in their ships. They probably reached Glastonbury from Bath. Canute himself passed through Bath.

In post-Alfred days Severn defence was well organised against casual forays by Edward the Elder, who was ready to meet the Danish Rhoald in A.D. 915.

Florence, of Worcester, writes :—

"So the King posted different portions of his army in suitable places on the South side of the river Severn from Cornwall to the mouth of the river Avon" (where Bristol would be threatened). "But leaving their ships on the strand they plundered stealthily by night to the east of Weced (Watchet) and

again at a place called Portlocan, but on each occasion all were slain by the King's Army except such as fled like cowards to their ships. Overpowered by their defeat they retired to an island called Reoric (*i.e.* the Flat Holm) where they remained until a number of them died of starvation. So driven by necessity they sailed first to Diomed (the country of the Dimetians) and afterwards, in the Autumn, to Ireland."

To this period belongs, in all probability, the exploits of Aelle the Governor of Bristol (c. 920) celebrated by Thomas Rowlls, a Carmelite friar and father Confessor to William Cannyng, founder of S. Mary Redcliffe Church, written in 1468.

"O Thou (or what remains of thee)
Aelle, the darlynge of futuritye,
Lette thys mie song bold as thy courage bee
As everlastynge to posteritye.
Whanne Dacya's sons, with hair of bloodred hue
Like Kynge—coppes brastyng with the mornynge
dewe."

"Arraunged in drear arraye
Upon the lethale daye
Sprede, farr and wyde, on Watchet's shore
Thenne dydst thou brondeous stande
And with thie burlye hande
Besprynge all the mees wythe gore."

"Drawn by thine anlace fell
Down to the depths of hell
Thousands of Dacyans went :
Brystowans, menne of myghte
Ydar'd the blodie fyghte
And acted deeds full quent."

etc., etc. Evans' *Old Ballads*.

Quite Chaucerian, in some of the forms and words used we exclaim, and no wonder that on

the place of carnage were raised three great mounds near Watchet called Grabburrowes.

The fact seems to be that King Alfred had in 878 left the Severn Sea unguarded by a fleet,* and we now come to a most potent cause of his discomfiture which, combined with other reasons such as the defection of Mercia and the overwhelming numbers of the Danes, seems enough to account for his forlorn state in the marshes of North Petherton. Hubba, the brother of Inguar and Guthrum, had conceived the idea of invading South Wales and of wintering there. The strategy of this is most clear. Quartered comfortably during the winter of A.D. 877, in the notable "Foresta de Dene" (known as the *Danica sylva* in old maps) where his ships could be easily refitted and his store of iron for weapons could be replenished from the forges of the forest itself—celebrated since the days of the Romans—Hubba must have kept King Alfred in the utmost alarm and uncertainty. From the Usk he could strike at North Somerset by short forays even in winter. At the same time he was in easy communication with Gloucester

* From the *Chronica Majora* of Matthew Paris it may be inferred that King Alfred did not seriously organise his fleet till A.D. 897, at which time he made "*longas naves quas cyulas sive galeas appellant . . . in quibus armatis impositis jussit maris semitas observari.*" Sir John Spelman, in his life of King Alfred described the ships as "rowed with 50 oars apiece and as long again and as high again and more steady in sail than the best of the enemy's ships . . . they had a plain level deck above the place where the rowers sat and from thence had great odds of advantage. They were like the traditionary ships of the Veneti with which Cæsar fought and were very high in the poops . . . but the ships of the Veneti went with sails of leather, King Alfred's chiefly with oars.

and Chippenham, the latter place being only 20 miles from Bristol. It is quite possible that the Battle of Brent Knoll and the skirmishes round the entrenched portions above Watchet took place in the winter of A.D. 877. "Danes Castle," near Watchet, may have been occupied at that time; also Daneknap above Nettlecombe. (*See Bowen's map*).

The Forest of Dene is called by Giraldus Cambrensis, *temp.* Henry II., "Nobilis Danubiæ sylva" and this is rendered by David Powell, his learned Welsh commentator, (c. 1580), as the *Danica sylva* lying at the extreme corner of the confluence of the Wye and Severn so called from the Danes, called also Dacians, who occupied it in the time of King Alfred and so gave it its distinctive name. In the "Theatrum orbis Terrarum" of 1574 it appears here. In his "Breviary of Britayne" (p. 42) Humfrey Lloyd writes thus: "In the very corner between the Severn and the Wye, not far from the Town of Rosse, is that renowned wood which of the Danes is called the 'Forest of Dene.'" Mr. Stevenson (*Athenæum*, Sep. 15th, 1906) says that the derivation of Dene Forest from the Danes is "a strange idea." If so it has authority, and the "strangeness" lies in the fact that Mr. Stevenson is unaware apparently of this authority.

But with the spring of A.D. 878 the time had come for a more decisive blow than any yet given. The mouth of the Parret had already been gained and the right or Eastern bank lay in the hands of the Danes. Here for a time the

invaders were held in check. On the Western side the shores of still unconquered Dumnonia extended, for the best authorities are agreed that in former days the river Pedret or Parret constituted an ethnical and tribal boundary and that as far as geographical nomenclature went then Dumnonia really included the North littoral of Somerset as apart from the "Summertunensis Paga" or region round Somerton. (See Appendix A.) More than thirty years previously, as above hinted, the Danish ships had gathered at the mouth of the Parret (*æt Pedridan mutham*) where in A.D. 845 "*Dux Ernulphus cum Sumersætensibus and Dux Osricus cum Dorsetensibus et Alstano Scireburnensis Episcopo*" had defeated them with great slaughter. The spot was well known to them and now at last they seemed to have gained the upper hand. The mouth of the Parret was forced and Glastonbury had fallen.

For the moment the Danish leader neglected to attack the Quantocks and the high lands to the North of Athelney but together with Inguar he made a bold dash at Somerton itself. With the mouth of the Parret in his possession this dash was a fairly easy matter to accomplish, especially about March, when, at the time of the equinox, the spring tides rise highest and the tidal Bore up the Parret is exceptionally strong. The days also were rapidly lengthening and there was every reason for renewed activity. From a remark made by Sir John Spelman, Hubba was noted for his impetuous valour, Inguar on the other hand for his more

calculating daring, but the union of dash and caution in both must have made them formidable combatants. Wessex was at their mercy, the Severn Sea was open to them, and up every creek and channel where there was a tidal bore their ships could float up on their devastating errand unassisted by oar or sail.

To understand better the valley of the Parret and the *terrain* on which and around which the last phases of this campaign were enacted, it may be well to recall some of the general features of the somewhat winding and perplexing river itself. There is no doubt that at many points the Parret, once largely spread over acres of ooze, and a primitive muddy wilderness, has materially shifted its course. This may be proved by the fact that portions of parishes, formerly divided clearly enough by the old channels, have been changed and are found in certain detached portions, now east and now west of the old beds. In one spot, near Downend and Puriton, where the river used to make a notable loop or curve towards the South, the hand of man has intervened within fairly recent times (1677) and has transferred one portion of the parish of Chilton Trinity from the north to the south of the river.*

Here and there, where the wear of ages has been incessant and the action of tides and

* See *Proceedings* of Som. Arch. Society, Vol. LIII, p. 174, Article by Rev. W. H. P. Greswell. See also *The Royal Geographical Journal*, May, 1910, for a description of changes in the course of the River Trent, a parallel instance.

floods has been unremitting, whole sections of half reclaimed marshes have been obliterated, for which indeed the rector or vicar claims an original tithe, much to the farmer's consternation. In the parish of Pawlet the Abbey lands of S. Augustines, Bristol, included 358 acres and we are informed in a note in the tithe map that "adjoining these lands are 150 acres or thereabouts which have accumulated and been gained in consequence of the river Parret, which bounds this parish on the west, having gradually shifted its bed and receded westwards." The parish of Pawlet has grown therefore at the expense of Chilton Trinity across the river.

But there is one constant and unvarying feature about the Parret and that is the phenomenon known as "The Bore" or tidal wave. Twice a day with a greater or less velocity according to the state of the tides themselves the bore rushes up the channel of the Parret, occasionally rising to a height of twenty feet at Bridgwater, which is no less than fourteen miles from the mouth at Burnham. An easterly or north easterly wind blowing strongly down the Bristol Channel tends to lower the level of the waters: a southerly or westerly wind (perhaps the most common in these latitudes) to raise them still higher by banking up the water in Bridgwater Bay. At the same time a heavy downpour of rain or a melting of spring snow will often aggravate the evil of the waters if they occur simultaneously with the period of high equinoctial tides. Some

miles above Bridgwater the Parret is reinforced at Borough Bridge (King Alfred's Toteate) by the waters of the Tone which rises on the Brendon hills and gives its name to Taunton (Toneton or Tânton.)

According to a modern Parliamentary Report on "The Floods of Somerset" (1873) the area of the Parret watershed is 565 square miles, that of the river Cary that rises close to Cadbury camp 79 square miles, that of the Brue which flows from Glastonbury and finds its exit near the mouth of the Parret 207 square miles ; that of the Axe, which of course has a separate basin to the east, but close to Glastonbury, 98 square miles. Added together these give us a total of 949 square miles of which in modern times, notwithstanding the efforts of generations of commissioners of sewers and drainage boards, no less than 107 square miles are still liable to floods. Speaking more particularly of the Parret the area liable to floods in the upper part of it and beyond Langport, the old port of Somerton, is still 24,137 acres, that in the lower Parret 15,135 acres. In King Alfred's time we must probably treble or quadruple the flooded areas and even supposing that there were "walls" and retaining banks in those days it would have been King Alfred's policy to break them down and flood the country for self-protection. A very large portion of this country lies ten or fifteen feet below the level of spring tides, as a glance at the levels given in the ordnance maps will prove.

The force of the tidal bore does not exhaust itself at Bridgwater but rushes up as far as Langport on strong spring tides, a distance of 25 miles, and as far as Borough Bridge and the junction of the Tone, close to Athelney, on neap tides. The pace of the bore varies from three to four miles an hour, slow along broad reaches and swifter round sharp curves and a narrowing bed. Of Lamport, or Langport, old Gerard wrote c. 1630, "For that it hath been a port is probable enough. The very name shews that it was anciently a port or inland haven, the river being large enough noe doubt to bring up vessels of some burthen as it does barges this day." It is still possible to reach Langport, the old port of Somerton, from the Parret mouth and the Severn Sea.

It is not at all likely that the Danes, having command of the Parret mouth, and presumably its flooded banks, should have neglected such an unique opportunity for an inland raid as that provided by the channel of the river Parret, especially when it led them right up to the town of Somerton and the heart of the "Summurtunensis pagæ." Fortunately the following notice of Somerton preserved in the Cotton MS. (Julius F. VI. Folio 404) throws a welcome light upon the Parret episodes of this Danish war. "The shire Towne of Somersettshire ab antiquo : of grett capacitye, walled in the Saxon's time, overrowne by the Danes—cheffely by Hynguar and Hubba."

The time of the raid was in the spring of A.D. 878 and it must have been made *before*

the battle at Arx Cynuit, where Hubba was slain. Moreover the very fact that Hubba and Inguar are mentioned together in this old MS. notice proves that there was concerted action. Hinguar would have marched on Somerton by the Fossway, leading a land contingent from Chippenham. Hubba would have rushed up the Parret with his ships. Lappenberg, in his History of England under the Anglo-Saxon Kings, evidently thinks that "it might have been in consequence of an agreement between the Vikings at Gloucester and Hubba that an attack was made on all sides on Wessex." Mr. W. H. Stevenson (*Athenæum*, Oct. 5th, 1907) maintains that Danish co-operation in this campaign is simply imaginary, but, surely, there is every historical reason in favour of it. From the base of Chippenham the Danish attacks would make themselves felt in ever widening circles. The net was being woven to enclose King Alfred in his last fastness.

It may be asked whether on the lower Parret itself there was any likely place where the Danes could make their rendezvous both by river and by land. Here again old charters and MSS. come to our help and assist materially to elucidate the local features of this campaign.*

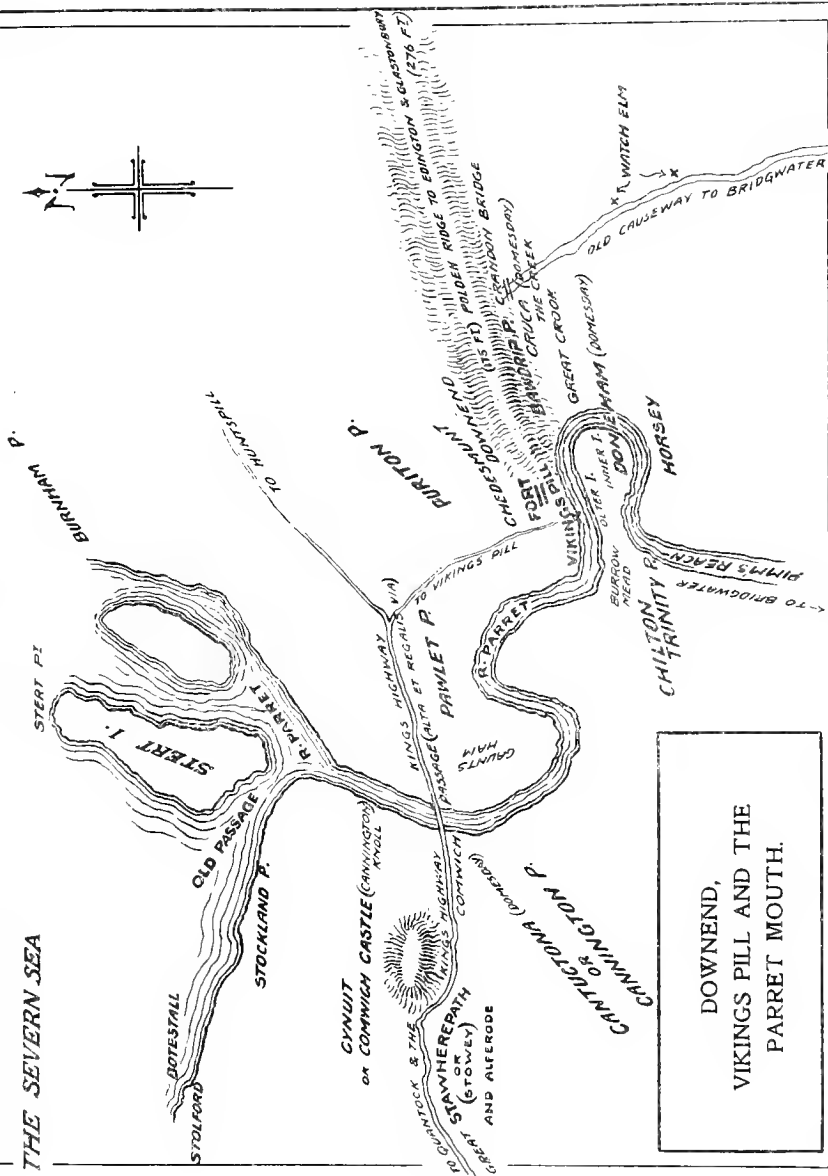
In the deeds belonging to the Augustinian monks of Gaunt's Hospital, Bristol, is a long

* *Placita coram Domino Rege apud West monasterium de Termino S. Michælis 4 Henry IV. Thesaurus Chartarum et aliorum Munimentorum Domus S. Marie de Billeswik.*

description of the lands belonging to them at Paulet or Poulet in the lower reaches of the river Parret. Mention is there made of a "Via alta et regalis" also of a well-known "communis semita equitibus et militibus" from "Comwich passage" to "Vikingspill" *i.e.* the Pill or landing place of the Vikings. The Placename occurs several times and was well known in the reign of Henry IV, at the time when the Placita or Pleas were written. As we have shown that the Danes never succeeded in making a lodgement (as opposed to a desultory raid) in the valley of the Parret at any time excepting at this particular crisis, the Placename "of Vikingspill" must clearly be dated back to A.D. 877, or A.D. 878.

This Vikings Pill, from the local description given in the Charter, can most clearly be identified with a place known better in after centuries as Downend Pill—or perhaps Walpole close by—at the foot of the Polden Hills. Downend, which is marked in Speed's maps, was formerly an important manor in the great Barony of Nether Stowey and was held, together with the Domesday Peritone or Peretun *i.e.* the ton on the river Parret. Here was also a borough called often in the Somerset Pleas "Burgh de Capite Montis" with a *Burgriht* (Pipe Rolls). The borough still survives in Burrow mead just opposite. Sometimes the place here was called Chedesmunt in the Placita. In Saxton's map a curious place-name here is "Chieschettle of y mount." In Saxon times it was far more important than

THE SEVERN SEA



the neighbouring Burgh of Bridgwater, *i.e.* the Burgh de Walter (de Dowai) the Domesday tenant. It was by Downend Pill and Puriton that the pilgrims from South Wales would naturally find their way to Glastonbury. Local tradition still has it that this was the earliest route thither, ascending gradually the slopes of the Polden Hill, and winding round to the old Abbey by way of Street or making a shorter cut across the Moors by a log or corduroy causeway. One of the Saxon Kings had given Puriton to the Church of St. Peter at Rome and Puriton Church was one of the very few that belonged to the "Episcopus" as he is called (not Pope) of Rome.*

When Hildebrand died c. 1086, about the time of the great Domesday Survey, Puriton and Downend fell into the King's hands and were never given back to Rome, perhaps because King William considered all such endowments as really his own. However this may be, "La Donende," or Downend, with the adjacent Domesday Manor of Cruca, *i.e.* the creek (still living in the place-name of Crook) on the Parret was a most important point as the spot where boats anchored and all passengers landed for the Polden ridge. The Danes saw at once the advantage of such a spot, where in Saxon times, presumably, arose the strong "Burgh de Capite Montis," and here at Vikingspill they landed and effected a lodgment. This place will figure, as we shall

* See Exon Domesday.

see, in the course of the campaign as their depôt and finally their last stronghold on the Parret.

A few miles below Vikings Pill is the well-known Cumwich Passage, called the "Hed of Cumwich" in old Bridgwater documents, signifying the head of navigation in later times for larger ships. Just here the river Parret from time immemorial has been crossed by a "hard" or ledge of blue lias rocks uncovered more or less at low water. In some respects it resembles the rough and ready drifts of flooded South African rivers and, indeed, up to comparatively modern times, was crossed by waggons. In 1799, the Rev. Richard Warner, the Bath historian and well known tourist in the West of England, who has written "Warner's Walks," ferried here on his journey from Brent to Stoke Courcy. Far back in British days a regular traffic was carried on across this—the only available ford of the river Parret. The road that connected it on one side with Brent knoll and on the other with Cannington Knoll (an old fortified place) is clear enough. Indeed, up to the present day, as a proof of its great antiquity, it furnishes the distinctive boundaries of many parishes both sides of the Parret. It is a "trunk" road with numerous lateral feeders or side tracks well deserving the old description of "*alta et regalis Via*." It passes a notable old oak called Kit Cot Oak, on the west, now almost gone, but said to be 1,000 years old.

Without any reasonable doubt Cannington

knoll, standing within a mile or so of the west bank of the Parret and dominating the ancient highway that ran past, was the same as "Comwich Castle," Comwich lying within Cannington parish. The word "Castle" still belongs to it, and is found in the parish tithe commutation schedule. In West Somerset (as elsewhere) the word "Castle" is often applied, not to a Norman fortress or to any building of feudal times, but to a strongly entrenched or fortified place. Such a place was Comwich Castle. At present it lies in a block of high and rather stony land extending over an area of 150 acres. A large wall of loosely compacted stones runs round part of it—the only "walls" in this neighbourhood where earth banks and fences are the rule and resembling the walls which are very common in Wales. Bishop Asser very appropriately says, speaking as a Welshman, and from personal knowledge, that Cynuit *i.e.* Cumwich Castle, was fortified "more nostro," perhaps like Worleborough Camp, near Weston-super-Mare. Further, he points out that Cumwich Castle had no spring of water within it and such indeed is now the case. The whole mass consists of an isolated outcrop of carboniferous limestone with very shallow soil. The place has never been cultivated and lies now, in all probability, exactly as Bishop Asser saw it, a rough scrubby natural fortress, easily made defensible on all sides except towards the east. To this day the casual explorer may pick up flint arrow-heads

and bits of old British pottery, especially where rabbits have endeavoured to burrow in the scanty soil, thus proving ancient British occupation of a stronghold so eminently desirable for the command of the Parret mouth and the adjacent moors and marshes. It would have been a natural route for Bishop Asser to know whenever he crossed over from South Wales and journeyed from Caerwent (Venta Silurum) or Caerleon to Somerset. The Bishop was locally interested in the Somerset Monasteries of Banwell and Congresbury, almost within sight. Communication by water between all the ports of the Severn Sea was far better known and more common than it is now. The Sailor Saints of the Severn Sea led the way for generations.

Against the identification of "Cumwich Castle" by Bishop Clifford with the Arx Cynuit or Cynwyt or Cymwith certain authorities such as Mr. W. H. Stevenson, the well known editor of Asser's works, have raised serious objections. Indeed, Mr. Stevenson, usually so careful and painstaking in his textual criticism of old documents, goes so far as to say that "Bishop Clifford's attempt to prove that Cynuit was Cannington Park, Somerset, is one of the wildest freaks in his astounding paper. In the *Proceedings* of the Somerset Archæological Society for 1876 he alters the corrupt late form Cynwith into Cynwich and identifies it with Combwich." In this case a great deal depends upon a name and we would draw Mr. Stevenson's

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

South Wales
or
Demetia

The Severn Sea

- To Cornwall

Σιμόω (part)

11

DEVONSHIRE

PART OF ASSER'S EPISCOPAL
JURISDICTION,

Circa 900.

Exeter & about 20 miles out, de Somerset.

attention to the fact that old documents again and again have been very useful to establish Bishop Clifford's theory and have given us very similar forms to Cynuit as the alternative names of Cumwich. The modern spelling of Combwich is obviously wrong, as there is no semblance of a "Combe" in this flat region. The modern Combwich or Combwitch, a strange perversion, is represented by Comwiz in the Pipe Rolls of 24, Henry II (1178), by Comwys and Cunyz, in the Placita of 27, Henry III, by Comyz in 9 of Ed. I. (Wells MSS.), by Comwyz and Cumwyz in the same ; by Cunyz or Comwyz in the Placita of Edward III. Now Mr. Stevenson must admit that the difference between such a form as Cunyz and Asser's Cynuit is not great. Moreover, Roger, of Hoveden, writes Cynwith; Simeon, of Durham, Cymwith, which is closely allied to Cumwich. As in Ipswich (Domesday) the final *wich* is interchangeable with *wiz*. The Domesday equivalent of Combwich is Comich, Commiz or Commit.

Apart from etymology and correct spelling according to laws of philology, to which we think that Mr. W. H. Stevenson assigns too much importance, especially if he is in the habit of handling old documents and of comparing the degenerate and diversified forms of the same place-name, we have in Cumwich or Cunyz Castle exactly the place we are in search of in the immediate neighbourhood of Athelney during the final stages of this Danish campaign. After the Sack of Somerton, the next

vulnerable point was "Cumwich Passage," with the command of the road which led straight from that point up the ridges of the Quantock Hills to the immediate rear of the Athelney fortress. It was at Comwich, therefore, that the next encounter took place, and here again the Danes were victorious and drove the defending force under Odda, the Alderman of Devon, into the shelter of the adjacent Arx Cynuit. There is every reason to suppose that here Hubba was acting in concert with the Danes, whose base was at Vikings Pill, just below the Polden Ridge. Hubba's ships would of course be available as transports from the east to the west of the river.

Hubba, thinking that he held the defeated troops of Odda, the Alderman of Devon, in the hollow of his hand, as they would presently be forced to surrender owing to lack of water and of supplies, seems to have acted carelessly or foolishly. To use Asser's words "the Christians before reduced to such hardships and acting from Divine instigation thought it far better to risk death or victory in the open field and at the very dawn of day make a vigorous attack upon their enemies and slay them, allowing only a few to escape to their ships by flight, and so Hubba, together with 1,200 men, was cut down with a sorry ending acting foolishly (*perperam agens*) before the Arx Cynuit. Matthew Paris says that Inguar was also slain and so both Hubba and Inguar atoned for the blood "Beati regis et martyris Edmundi ante arcem Cynwit."

Bishop Clifford thinks that the forces of Hubba and Inguar were separated by the river Parret and that those of the Danes, who were on the east side, could almost see their comrades fighting on the west but were powerless to help. The ships of the attacking party would naturally have been anchored on the west side, and the Parret itself at low water, when the tide is ebbing, is very wide just here and very difficult for troops to cross. The current would be strong and the mud impassable. The ford or drift, it must be remembered, was never available for horse and foot excepting for a very short time at the lowest ebb and when the tides were slack. Probably Odda saw the right moment for attack, and the Dumnonian contingent recruited from the ranks of the hardy west-countrymen struck home. After the battle the Danes were apparently able to bury their dead, as they buried Hubba, and so this explains one version of the fight that although conquered they remained masters of the field of battle. As Bishop Clifford surmises, the rest of the Danes may have been able to cross the Parret when the ford was ready for them and so have succoured their friends, the Dumnonian contingent retiring westwards upon the Quantocks after this unparalleled success.

How the ambushade took place and when the sally was made will never be known. The Danes were caught napping for once and, according to one account in Sharon Turner, Odda (Odunus), the Dumnonian leader,

penetrated straight to the tent of Hubba and slew him. As mute witnesses of the severity of this battle men's bones are constantly being exhumed in a quarry now being worked on the eastern side, where in all probability the brunt of the fighting took place. In an old Chronicle cited by Hearne (*Archeologia*, Vol. VII., p. 134) it is said "and when the Danes found Hinguar and Hubba ded thei bare them to a mountayn there beside and made upon hym a logge and lete call it Hubba lugh." The Danish word would be "loge." The spot selected is said to have been in Devonshire, *i.e.* Dumnonia, the country west of the Parret, and is still an archæological puzzle, (Appendix A). Geoffrey Gaimar places the scene of Hubba's death in the "Bois de Pene," apparently an equivalent for "Penselwood," the scene of King Alfred's muster before Edington. As "Selwoodshire" was a large district and loosely so called, the confusion of places and events may easily have been made by a rhyming historian like Gaimar.

The moral effect of this surprise victory was enormous. Was not that famous Raven flag, woven of white silk in one night by the three sisters of Hubba, captured by the Saxons? This flag had always been a talisman with the Danes. When victory was assured a Raven, the emblem of Odin (figuring on the coins of Anlaf the Danish King of Northumbria) would appear as if woven into it, endowed with life and flapping its wings. On the other hand, if disaster for the Danes impended, the flag hung low and flapped idly without sign of bird life.

The effect upon Guthrum, whether at Chippenham or elsewhere, must have been one of the utmost panic and alarm. On both sides efforts were redoubled to bring matters to a crisis.

For a moment it will be necessary to revert to King Alfred at the particular crisis of the morning sally from the Arx Cynuit. It does not appear for certain whether he was present at the struggle for Comwich Passage or not. Sir John Spelman does not think he was there. At any rate if he was, he must, like the rest, have been compelled to retreat, and instead of shutting himself up with Odda at Cynwich Castle, to retire by way of the Quantock ridges and the "great Staw Herepath" to his retreat at Athelney. In old MSS. there is an Alferode or Alfred's road along this line, a most suggestive place-name. Asser simply says of the sequel :

"The same year after Passover King Alfred with a few helpers made a fort in a place which is called Aethelingæg and from that fort renewed the war with zest against the Pagans (*indefatigabiliter rebellavit*) in conjunction with the subjects of Somerton (*cum fassellis Summurtunensis pagæ.*") In the A.S. Chronicle he is said to be fighting "from time to time" and "with that part of the men of Somerset which was nearest to it." His field of action being limited to Athelney Guthrum was trying to close in upon him along the Parret.

King Alfred's faithful followers were sorely

certain messuage called Windenreid, within the manor of Newton Forester in the Hundred of North Petherton, and was held jointly with the five forests in the county. With Newton-Forester were closely connected not only the King's Wastes (vasta) of North Curry and the Hundreds of Andersfeld and North Petherton but the forests on Cantucudu, *i.e.* Quantock Wood and along the Quantock hills, where Cannington (or Cantuctun) Hundred can still be traced, and the Manor of Cantuc (Domesday) identified above Enmore Castle. The call would go from Newton-Forester westward to the herdsmen, shepherds, foresters and swineherds of distant Exmoor and to the wastes and manors of Williton Hundred and of Carhampton Hundred, the latter, like Cannington, part of the old Saxon ancient demesne and mentioned in the King's Will as some of the inheritance of Edward the Elder.

So, too, with King Alfred's manor of Burnham at the mouth of the Parret and Wedmore further inland on the east side of the river, the King's Loyalists there would rush back to the flag, such indeed as survived the Danish attacks in that quarter and had escaped their fury. So, too, with the men of the Royal Burgh of Axbridge, and of the Royal Forest of Cheddar, (mentioned in King Alfred's will) such a favourite chase of the old Saxon Kings, as we may learn from Axbridge documents. Stout Dumnonians from the sea-coast, miners from Mendip, sailors from Porlock or Watchet, *porcarii* from Petherton, foresters from all the

Western wilds and woodlands, perhaps a goodly sprinkling amongst them of "Wealas-cynne" besides Saxons, were still at King Alfred's service. And the Dumnonians under Alderman Odda had done wondrous things at the Castle of Cynuit for the example of others.

We may get an inkling therefore of the character of the force now left at King Alfred's disposal. If Somerton Castle, the old Saxon centre, had fallen, why should not another fastness arise at Athelney? So day and night after Easter the work of hasty fortification went on and King Alfred's two towers, described by William of Malmesbury, and built probably of wood, arose. There was no access to Athelney itself, *nisi cauticis*, i.e. boats, according to some, but raised causeways according to others, (Du Cange's Glossary). Along Stanmoor such a causeway, protected at the two ends by King Alfred's two towers, seems to have linked Athelney with Othery, following the line of the existing road that leads right up to Borough Mump. For here in this retired and old-world region, especially when the floods are out, it is possible still to trace the plan of King Alfred's defences just as they were made. No roads or buildings obscure the broad original features of the moorland. Yonder is Athelney, here is the "Toteyate," all round the glimmering marshes barely saved from constant floods and still echoing at twilight with the call of the wild fowl. There is still the beat of that tidal Bore throbbing past the islet as it throbbed centuries

ago—still the pulse of waters past tinkling reeds, osiers and alder groves, (Appendix C). It is possible also that King Alfred still held as a stronghold Leodgaresbury further west, the site of which was afterwards occupied by the Norman Castle of Montacute. It was in a commanding position and was always King's Demesne. Under the name of Biscopeston or Bishopstowen it was one of the most important gifts of King Alfred to his abbey at Athelney.

The contest at last resolved itself into a struggle round Somerton and Langport for the valley of the Parret, from north to south, from the sources of the river in south Somerset to its mouth in the Severn Sea. This conflict between opposing forces of Danes and Saxons resembles the previous struggles between the British and the Saxons. Not far off rose Cadbury, that "Tower of War" with its triple rampart once guarded by King Arthur, and close by, on the lowlands, Langport, the port of Somerton.

"At Llangporth was Geraint slain,
The bold warrior of the woodlands of Dvyneint
Slaughtering the foe as he fell
At Llangporth was slain to Arthur,
Emperor and conductor of the toil of war,
Valorous men who with steel hewed down their foes."

Llywarch Hên.

In subsequent centuries we shall find that the Parliamentary troops fought for Somerton, that there was actually a Battle of Langport and that Royalist troops under Goring were stationed on Borough Mump. Petherton Park was noted for skirmishes in the same Civil

War and the siege and fall of Bridgwater Castle in 1645 meant not simply the loss of that town for the Royalists but the quelling of Royalist hopes westward. Admiral Blake's successful defence again, of Taunton Castle, within five or six miles of Athelney, set the seal of victory upon Cromwell's western campaigns. Then, in 1688, once more the roar of war was heard in "the King's pastures" of King's Sedgmoor. In a house near Aller Church, famed for Guthrum's baptism and four miles distant from Somerton, the story goes how Royalist fugitives, after the battle of Allermore, crouched and hid beneath an oak table fleeing from the stroke of war. History, indeed, has repeated itself in this part of the "Paga Summurtunensis" now lying so peaceful in its solitude and wrapped in a rural repose. Indeed, the grass-grown streets of Somerton could tell many a tale and so could those of Roman Ilchester. Certain little detached forts of this region and neighbourhood lying within the narrowed *terrain* of the Alfred campaign must attract our notice and cause us to wonder whether they were of use in the everyday strategy of that time. Not far up the river that empties itself in the Parret at Cumwich stood a British entrenchment at Nether Stowey. At Domesday it was part of Count Harold's domains, and, lying in the Hundred of Cannington, must have been in King Alfred's hands. Just above it is Danesborough, where it is possible that the Danes encamped for a brief time after the battle of Cynuit and before

the battle of Edington. For strangely enough the old hill has still locally two names, "Dousbre"—so spelt 200 years ago,—and "Danesborough," the first showing perhaps one association and the second another. For they do not appear to be equivalent forms. Danish legends have lingered round the slopes of Danesborough till modern times, and William Wordsworth enshrined one of them in "The Danish Boy" when he was living close by at Alfoxton (1797-8), as noted above.

Then there is the remoter fastness of Roborough hidden deep in the Hundred of Andersfeld—the Hundred of Lyng and Athelney itself—and itself an outlying member of the King's *curia* at Somerton. Here for centuries after King Alfred's day was a Royal Porcheria owing payment to Somerton, "when Quantock was a forest" as the note goes in the Hundred Rolls of Edward I. Roborough strikes the visitor as an ideal forest refuge even at the present day. Further west and in the Royal preserves of Neroche Forest was the old fort known in later years as Castle Neroche. This place was linked with Athelney by a Herepath like Roborough on the Quantocks, one fort communicating with another along the ridges and down through the uncertain *cauticæ* or droves of the quaking bogs and morasses.

In a campaign of this sort, hinging as it did in the last resort upon lines of quick communication, it must be remembered that the Danes were at some disadvantage in fighting with King Alfred acting from interior lines and

through a network of Herepaths known to himself and his followers. The only road we suppose that the Danes could absolutely command was the Roman Fosseway running from Bath southwards to Ilchester. These Roman roads were in full use during Alfred's reign, as "The Watling Street" was actually made the limit between Alfred's domain and Guthrum's kingdom in the east. The Fosseway must have been equally famous and the Danes must have used a portion of it when they rode from Wareham to Exeter.

During the seven weeks that elapsed between Easter (March 23) and the Battle of Edington King Alfred was strengthening his position. To this period belongs surely, the romantic incident of his penetration into the camps of the Danes and possibly into the very presence of Guthrum as a minstrel. The story has stuck to the neighbourhood, and an old Athelney inhabitant informed the writer that King Alfred, who had received a "slap under the ear" from the woman for neglecting the historic cakes, then went out to the camp of the Danes and "played music to them like a boy." There is surely no reason to doubt the old-world report that, anxious for accurate information about his enemies at this particular crisis, King Alfred did assume the garb of a "joculator" and played music to them. But where was the scene of this adventure? Surely not at Chippenham, in Wiltshire, fifty or sixty miles away! No, this minor act of a great drama was rehearsed surely on the Poldens and

not far from Vikings Pill, where the Danes were encamped near Downend, the "Paganica arx" of Asser and the "Geweorc" of the Saxon Chronicle.

The King's intelligence being complete, the last great rendezvous was summoned at Egbright's Stone, near Kingsettle Hill—the name itself gives a clue—and the men of *Somertunensis Paga* recruited by those of Wiltshire and Hants were massed on that early May morning on the skirts of Selwood. It is more than probable that a system of Fire Beacons was used to rouse the country. There is a hill called "Fire Beacon Hill" above Crowcombe on the Quantocks, not far from "Alferode," also Bagcan-Borough or Beacon-Borough (Bagborough) itself whence signals could be flashed westward to Dumnonia without attracting the attention of the Danes encamped in the valley of the Parret. The first day's march took them to Eglea, which is probably Eggarley—miscalled Edgarley by a natural association with Glastonbury's great King—near Glastonbury (for the fight was for the sacred shrine of Christendom first and foremost) and then by another march to Edington on the Polden ridge. This ridge was the dominating factor of the great, and final fight and the advance of King Alfred from the south, thus taking the aggressive, must have been a surprise to the Danes. There is one passage in the Chronicle of John Wallingford which exactly expresses the tactics of the King, and it runs thus :—"The good King,

with due precaution for his followers, seized the higher ground which would have just suited his foes had they preoccupied it," meaning that the King got above them on the Poldens, a bit of local description that would hardly fit in with Bratton Castle and the Wiltshire Edington. Eglea, part of the original Glastonbury XII Hides, would have been a fitting bivouac and starting place on that fateful morning when not only the great Abbey but the very Christianity for which it stood lay at stake.

The village of Edington lies partly on the moors and partly on the ridge of the Poldens ; the battlefield of Edington is still pointed out and old men unconsciously say "They of Athelney fought there," and the Polden hills exactly suit the description we have of the fight in Symeon of Durham who says that the "*voces et collisiones armorum per longa terrarum spatia auditæ sunt.*" The ridge being sharp and narrow and not more than 200 feet to 300 feet high the noise of a running fight would have been heard easily on either side, far better than from the somewhat more inclosed country round the Wiltshire Edington. In the "*Flores Historiæ*" it is said that Guthrum was compelled by flight "*ingredi arcem quandam quæ prope erat.*" In the A.S. Chronicle the victorious Saxons rode after them to a "*Geweorc.*" Asser says that the fight was severe, beginning at dawn, and that the tactics of a dense formation were adopted by King Alfred "*cum densâ testudine atrociter*





FILL RIVER FARRER AND THE GOLDEN RIDGE.
THE OLD FADING PLACE.

belligerans, animoseque diu persistens divino nutu tandem victoriâ potitus." Pursuing them to the Arx he captured all the horses and caught outside and slew the men off-hand who could not escape. Then he besieged them for fourteen days and at last procured the surrender of Guthrum. If the Arx was really Bratton Castle one wonders why a depôt of booty should have been kept so close the base of Chippenham.

Bishop Clifford, whose local identifications are not always sound although his theory of the Edington strategy is good, perhaps better than he knew, thought that the Geweorc or Arx "*Quam firmaverant Dani*" was at Bridgewater Castle. But there was no Castle at Brugie (Domesday) in those days and, moreover, the way thither was too long. The trackways from Crandon Bridge must have been almost impassable and, for centuries afterwards, the Causeway across the moor was always in a foundrous state. No, the *arx* or *firmitas* was at Vikings Pill or Downend, a comparatively short distance from the battle field of Edington. The spring of water there, as now, would have been sufficient to afford drink to the Danes, but they were starved out for want of food. Outside the fort was Doneham, that islanded place in the adjacent marsh, giving pastures to their oxen and sheep that they had captured, but this, as the account shows, fell immediately into the hands of King Alfred.

It may be noted as a coincidence that when King Kenwalch, the first great Saxon conqueror

of the Parret, defeated the Waelas or Britons at Pen (Penselwood) in A.D. 650 (Ang. Sax. Chronicle) he drove them down to the *Pedridan muth*, or Parret mouth, much in the same way as King Alfred drove the Danes down the Polden ridge to Vikings Pill. Sharon Turner, in his history of the Anglo-Saxons, suggests that the Parret mouth is perhaps the Aber Peryddan of Golyddan.

It is a pity that the original features of the river Parret and of Doneham have been so completely obscured by comparatively modern alterations. As above hinted the curve of the Parret has disappeared in a new cut and a new "Floodway reach" has been formed artificially by the work of man (1677). The island called "Terra inter duas aquas" in Domesday, and noted by Paul Vinogradoff as a peculiar territorial expression, is gone and nothing appears now but an uninteresting flat. The Great Western Railway runs through part of the island just at Dunball Station near which was Vikings Pill, and had it not been for old documents no one would have suspected there the existence of a Parret Pill, or landing-place. Local folk spoke of the war and how "they of Athelney fought here," but they were disregarded. The railway navvies did in their cutting unearth several bushels of men's bones at Great Crooklands but no one quite realised the possibility of a Danish fight. Lower down ships still anchor and discharge their cargoes at Dunball. The field-names keep such expressions as "Salt Wharf" and "Borough



DOWNEND AND THE RIVER PARKET.
(FROM FOLDEN RIDGE.)

Mead," "Inner and Outer Island," etc., and a new road to Bristol, in the place of the old Causeway higher up, still puzzles the antiquary, whilst lime kilns deface the hill itself. Yet here, we feel sure, was that historic "Geweorc" where Guthrum and his followers finally surrendered to King Alfred.

It may be of interest to recall the fact that Knowle or Knoll hill on this part of the Poldens was the residence and favourite haunt of the great Admiral Blake. The old landing-place of Vikings Pill and of Downend Pill and the wide loop of the Parret must have been very familiar sights to him. Downend is still part of the Knowle property. May we not associate with the Poldens, not only England's greatest King, but also one of England's greatest patriots and Admirals, a true Viking of our rough annals?

Most people are familiar with the story of the vision of S. Cuthbert who encouraged King Alfred and promised to go before his standards and lead him to victory, but they may not know so well the Prayer supposed to have been uttered by King Alfred before the Battle of Edington and handed down by Nicholas Harpsfield (1514-1571). Sir John Spelman, in his "*Vita Alfredi Magni*," alludes to it, "which though I find not in Asser (which he cited for it), yet we may well enough allow it to be his, as agreeable to his piety." We may suppose, therefore, that it was spoken on the hillside of Polden within sight of S. Michael's Tor at Glastonbury,

where the pagans had already spent their usual desolating fury and left those blackened ruins till, as William of Malmesbury tells us, S. Dunstan restored the glory of the old shrine. King Alfred's eloquent oration, more inspiring to us than any speech of Thucydides, runs thus in Harpsfield :—rendered freely—

“To Thee, O great and glorious God we render as soldiers our hearty thanks for that Thou hast tried our faith and patience in so many hardships and difficulties of war and found them stayed on Thee. Thou hast grievously exercised Thy servants and Thou hast bent their strength to the uttermost but their heart stands firm and there is a remnant left. Justly have they atoned and made satisfaction for their misdeeds and such is Thy merciful goodness O God, that Thou hast not suffered them to be swallowed up in the multitude of their offences. Thou hast chastised them, O God, not with the scorpions of tyrants, but with Thy judgment as a Heavenly Father. Thou hast graciously received them into Thy favour as children brought back to penitence by Thine all-wise hand. Verily our enemies have increased against us and waxed great not by their own right arm but by reason of our own misdeeds and now I know, O God, that Thy terrors have come upon them and Thy wrath hath weakened them. We shall gather to ourselves good courage in the day of battle, for it is Thou, O God who art calling us and Thou who art bidding us go with full courage against our

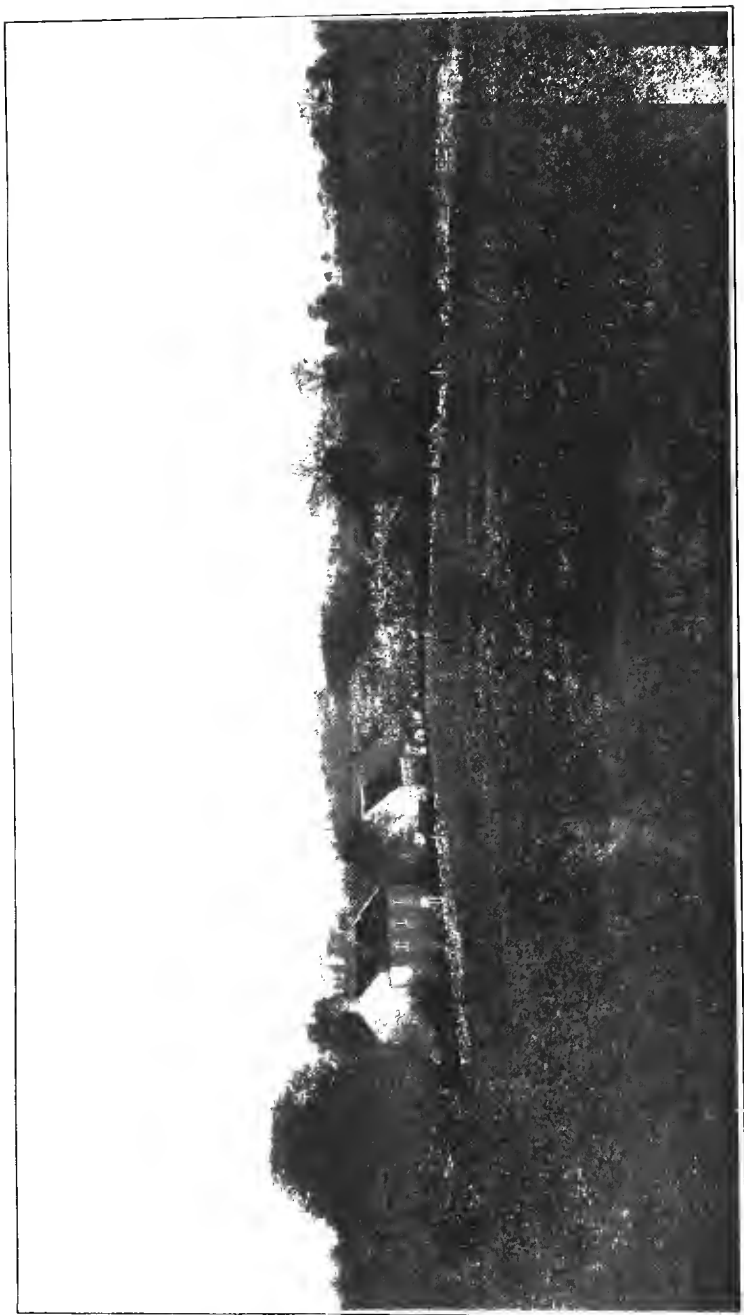
enemies, for Thou wilt never fail those who call upon Thee and put their trust in Thee. We bear in remembrance, O God, who and of what sort are those whom we, Thy servants, armed with justice and good cause now meet in the field of battle. Christians, we strive against Heathen, righteous we fight against unrighteous men. Our foes have laid waste our heritage, and like thieves and robbers, stolen our goods and done violence to Thy servants sparing neither old nor young, babes nor sucklings, child nor helpless woman. They have broken their oaths, run from their plighted word and held nothing sacred or holy in their sight. Thy servants are fighting, O Lord, on this Thy day not to despoil their adversaries and to ravish their goods, but only to recover their own of which they have been unjustly deprived. They are fighting to redeem their parents and their children from so great and so ignoble a slavery and to save their daughters and wives from the ruin of lust and rapine and dishonour. Nay, they are fighting not only for their hearths and homes wherein they dwell but for all Thy holy sanctuaries which they have laid waste, for the name of Christ, the Author and Finisher of their Faith."

Such was the noble prayer of the King and we are not surprised that the soldiers acclaimed it, venerating their leader and following him with good courage to the battle. It was indeed such a prayer as might come from the Christian hero, who after the Danish defeat

took Guthrum to the holy font at Aller and gave him a Christian name.

Nicholas Harpsfield quotes also Psalms xxxvi and lxvii, as echoing the spirit of the great Conqueror, thus adding one more instance to the many which illustrate "The Influence of the Psalms on Human Life." That the Danes should have been finally routed at Edington, a manor belonging by ancient endowment to the Abbey of Glastonbury which they had destroyed, seems but a just and fitting retribution. And the turn of the fight must have led the combatants to spots where the lofty Tor and the presiding Chapel or Church of S. Michæl could have been discerned in the distance. Here, indeed, was an answer to the clause of the old Saxon Liturgy "A furore Normannorum Eripe nos, Domine!"

The joy that thrilled through Wessex following upon the final overthrow and slaughter of the Danes must have been overwhelming, and may it not be possible to refer to this epoch of jubilation, the origin of "Hock day," an institution that, so far, seems to have puzzled all antiquaries? Sir Henry Spelman and others are agreed that Hockday, to begin with, commemorated some great slaughter of the Danes, possibly that during the reign of Ethelred which took place on November 13th, A.D. 1002. Some have associated it with the death of Hardi-Canute, June 8th A.D. 1042. But the anniversary of Hocktide was always "Quindena Pascha," *i.e.* the fifteenth day after Easter. In 1259



GLASTONBURY TOR FROM THE NORTH-WEST.

Matthew Paris speaks of a Parliament holden "in quindena Paschæ quæ vulgariter Hochdaie appellatur." So it is clear that neither the June nor November date can possibly suit.

The popular celebrations at Hocktide were spread over two days and were of a rough and boisterous kind. Fosbrooke, in his antiquities, says that on Monday the men "hocked" or tripped up the women with ropes placed across the road but that on Tuesday seemingly the more important and sensational anniversary, the women retaliated by tripping up the men. "Hock Tuesday money" was paid to the landlord "that his tenants and bondmen might celebrate Hock Tuesday" (Bailey's Dictionary 1728). In the accounts of Magdalen College, Oxford, there is mention of money paid "pro mulieribus hockantibus." In the Book of the Churchwardens' Accounts of Kingston-upon-Thames there is this entry as late as 1577-8. "Of the women upon Hock Tuesdays viii/ & vs. 11d." and so on. As we may imagine there was also a special brewing of Hock-ale, probably often consumed in the "Church Houses" of the day which were often devoted to such uses.

It is clear, however, that this Hock-day celebration was not of a strictly Church or ecclesiastical origin and so we are rather surprised to read that at Glastonbury, of all places in the Kingdom, a Sheriff's Court was always held at Hockday. If we run our eye through the "Rentalia et Costumaria" of Glastonbury and study Abbot Beere's Terrier, the half

yearly services and payments made and exacted from tenants are on Hockday, not Lady-day, as we might expect from S. Mary's great Benedictine Church, and Michaelmas.

Under the accounts given in Dugdale of Tewkesbury Abbey, which once held Puriton and Downend and the historic Vikings Pill, there is mention of the "Capitula de Hockeday." In Somerset, Cannington Priory marked Hockday (and Cynwit Castle was in Cannington) and in the history of Chard there was a Hundred Court of Hockday, and a Hockday in the Manor of Kilmersdon (A.D. 1253) and also in the Manor of Taunton.

It is strange that the origin of a Court day, putting aside its popular character as a season of ovation, should have been lost. But may it not here be suggested that the anniversary was begun first of all in order to keep alive the memory of the great slaughter of the Danes at Cynuit Castle? The date would apparently suit very well as it was shortly after Easter Day of A.D. 878 (March 23rd) that Alderman Odda made that notable sally. The "Quindena Paschæ" would then have been April 8th.

As time went on, this Danish celebration may have been again confused with the payment of "Plough-alms" within fifteen days of the festival of Easter (*i.e.* the quindena Paschæ) a donation of one silver penny for every hide of arable land exacted under the old Saxon appellation of "sulh-ælmesse, the word "sole" being still used in Somerset for a portion of the plough.

To trace the history therefore, of Hockday,

the celebration might resolve itself into (1) a rough pageant to commemorate the Danish defeat, (2) a plough offering, (3) a Court day and a pay day, and in course of time, the last aspect of this "Quindena Paschæ" might overshadow the others. In the payments of the hospital of S. Margaret's, Taunton, there was the item of "Ploughsilver" to wit, for every tenant to pay for every plough by ancient due *xiii/d* and then at the same time there was the "Turnus de Hockday" as opposed to the Autumn "Turnus" held by the great manor of Taunton Deane and a great law day. Far back in history the victory of Arx Cynuit, coming as it did as an epoch-making event and a rescue from slavery to freedom, might have prompted the whole chain. What better time to pay "Sole alms" than from the day when first of all ploughing and sowing could be made peacefully? What better time to mark a half-yearly payment and to acknowledge a peaceful transaction when peace and security were possible in the land? For, as Spelman reminds us, the Danish fury had quelled everything even the meeting of a Church Synod, if this indeed always meant peace.

But what had the women folk to do with it all? And especially the womenfolk of Wessex and of Somerset, for "Hockday" does not seem to have been popular in East Anglia and in the Danish portion of the land? The games themselves were rough and unseemly and a Bishop of Worcester had, in 1450, to denounce "*ligationes et ludos inhonestos*" on

Hockday (Lampson B. II. p. 204). Somehow or other there was a tradition that the women folk did enter into a conspiracy to rid the country of the "Lurdenes" or Lordains, *i.e.* the Lord Danes, and King Harold was made to speak thus to his soldiers just before the battle of Hastings:—

"King Harrolde, turning to his liegemen spake
 My merrie men be not cast down in mynde
 You only lode for aye to mar or make
 Before yonne Sonne has donde his welf you'll fynde
 Your loving wife who erst dyd rid the londe
 Of Lurdenes and the treasure that you have
 Will fall into the Norman robber's hande
 Unless with hande and harte you plaie the man."

Samuel Rowley.

The old rustic born beneath the slopes of Danesborough who told the writer that the Danes were red-headed men and beat ours, but "the women voak paid 'em out" had heard something too, we may take it for granted, handed on from father to son, so many hundreds of years ago. But how and in what fashion did the women do it? History is silent and the old man seemed to know or at any rate to have a theory how they hocked or tripped the Danes up, but he would not tell.

Was the Arx Cynuit or Cumwich Castle the scene of the great betrayal or the consummate artifice? How were those 1200 slain? And how came it to pass that the spirit of a Danish boy haunted for centuries the heather-clad slopes of grey old Danesborough beneath whose sides lurk still for the believing ear that magic music as of a full band and where great

giants thrust forth their hands and where in a money plot lies still some ancient Treasure Trove still to be exorcised if the delvers keep silence. Could the "Danish Boy" have been the subject of some forgotten romance? And amongst the women-folk could there have been found someone with the feelings of Hypermnestra, daughter of King Danaus, who by subtlety saved one she loved amongst the crowd, being "splendide mendax"? This Danish Boy of Danesborough was of royal blood and Wordsworth, catching the echoes of the dying local legend, hands down in his verses that he wore a royal vest of fur "in colour like the Raven's wing." The mention of the Raven's wing is suggestive and its use in Wordsworth's hands and indeed in the mouths of the old men who told the story was unconscious. But possibly the Raven's wing may recall the raven of Odin and the symbol of Anlaf and that wing on the flag at Cumwich Castle, embroidered by the sisters of Hubba, that hung listless on that fateful day. But all is peaceful on Danesborough now where, as elsewhere in this part of the world, fact and fiction, rumour and romance, are so curiously blended together in a kind of shadow land, where here at least the Danish Boy is the chief figure moving like a spirit across the Quantock dells and combes. Asser, the historian of King Alfred, saw at the King's Abbey of Athelney, under the tuition of John of old Saxony, that Danish youth amongst the neophytes converted to the Christian faith and by no means

the hindmost of the community. Could he have been the royal youth of the Legend, reserved like the chief Guthrum himself by King Alfred for a better life? At any rate Wordsworth has handed down the Quantock Legend of Danesborough and has told us how,

“The Danish Boy walks here alone :
The lovely dell is all his own.

A Spirit of noon-day is he ;
Yet seems a form of flesh and blood ;
Nor piping shepherd shall he be,
Nor herd boy of the wood.
A regal vest of fur he wears,
In colour like a raven's wing ;
It fears not rain, nor wind, nor dew ;
But in the storm 'tis fresh and blue
As budding pines in spring ;
His helmet has a vernal grace
Fresh as the bloom upon his face.

A harp is from his shoulder slung ;
Resting the harp upon his knee,
To words of a forgotten tongue
He suits its melody.
Of flocks upon the neighbouring hill
He is the darling and the joy ;
And often, when no cause appears,
The mountain ponies prick their ears,
They hear the Danish boy,
While in the dell he sings alone
Beside the tree and corner stone.

There sits he : in his face you spy
No trace of a ferocious air,
Nor ever was a cloudless sky
So steady or so fair.
The lovely Danish Boy is blest
And happy in his flowery cove ;
From bloody deeds his thoughts are far :
And yet he warbles songs of war,
That seem like songs of love,
For calm and gentle is his mien ;
Like a dead boy he is serene.”

APPENDIX A.

The Place-names Edington, Dimetia, Dumnonia, etc.

IT may be worth while to examine here some of the arguments for and against the place-name of Edington in Somerset as being the Ethandun of the Saxon Chronicle. As above hinted, Camden throws no real light upon the locality of the famous battle. Most commentators have blindly followed Camden's lead, notwithstanding his old-fashioned etymology and unscientific methods, and amongst them is Mr. W. H. Stevenson, the most recent editor of Asser's works. This gentleman boldly asserts that, as he has proved Ethandune to be an early equivalent of the modern Wiltshire Edington, this place can be philologically or otherwise (and especially philologically) the only one to suit the text. Mr. Stevenson rejects the Somerset Edington because he finds that its Domesday (1086) equivalent is Eduuinetune or Edwinetona. Now, if, with Mr. Stevenson, we pin our faith on Domesday orthography and the spelling of Domesday scribes we shall find that Mr. Stevenson is "hoist with his own petard." For the Wiltshire Ethandune does not appear as such in the Wiltshire Domesday, but is spelt Edendone. Now in very early Glastonbury documents the Somerset Edington appears (A.D. 1100-1200) as Edindone also. The battle itself, in the twelfth century, may always have been spoken of and spelt as the Battle of Edendone or Edington (not Ethandune at all), as Henry of Huntingdon gives Edendune as the site (A.D. 1150-1200), and Geoffrey Gaimar gives Edenesdone in his "Estoire des Engles" (c. A.D. 1150). There can, therefore, be no particular sanctity or permanence about the Saxon form of "Ethandune." For all we know, the Somerset Edington may have had a pre-existing form of Ethandon or Ethandune. There is no philological objection against either if the Wiltshire form has shown the change. The Wiltshire Ethandon, spelt also Edyndon and Edington in the Wiltshire Inquisition (1242-1326), proves that it is only a chance survival varying from the Domesday Edendone, which did not stereotype it. What is the value, therefore, of the "contemporary ninth century Ethandun"?

In the Somerset Domesday there are the forms of Edwinetona and of Eduuinetune for Edington. Can we offer any explanation of these variations? In the first place these forms constitute a Domesday solecism. The history of the Glastonbury manor of Edington on the Poldens is well known, and is easily traceable for centuries in old Glastonbury documents, such as the "Rentalia et Costumaria," but it is never once spelt Eduuinetune or Edwinetona. Some light may be thrown upon the difficulty from the fact that Glastonbury Abbey had two manors, Edindone or Edington,

so spelt in the twelfth century, and lying on the Poldens, where it is well known; and Edwyneston in Berkshire. A confusion, therefore, may easily have arisen between these two place-names, so similar in sound. Mr. Stevenson goes so far as to say that "the fact that the Somerset Edington is derived from Edwine(s)ton removes the linch-pin of the argument for locating the battle of Ethandun in Somerset." We cannot agree with him. Campaigns are not settled by philological disquisitions of a laboured kind, especially when the evidence of this single place-name is uncertain. There are a great many other circumstances connected with strategy to be considered, and strategy most certainly demands that the final battle of the campaign of A.D. 878 should be fought nearer King Alfred's base, as I have abundantly shown.

It is quite evident from his letters to the "Athenæum" (*q.v.*) that Mr. Stevenson has never quartered his ground in Somerset, or considered his Somerset *terrain*; also that he is ignorant of ancient geography and the real meaning of ancient geographical terms. As I shall point out he does not know his Exon: Domesday references. With regard to the question of exact spelling Mr. Stevenson must know, if he traces Domesday manors down the centuries, that there is often a bewildering variety. Indeed, there are nearly twenty ways of spelling Athelney, King Alfred's refuge. Cannington, in which Cynuit or Cymwich Castle lies, is spelt Cantucdun, Candeton, Cantoctona, the "ton" and the "dun" being interchanged.

DIMETIA.

With regard to another point in the early geography of this period Mr. Stevenson is very particular in limiting the geographical expression "Demetica regio" to Pembroke and the extreme west of Wales, in order to make the idea of Danish co operation improbable. Now, in the first place, it may be pointed out that "Demetica regio" may be regarded as a wider geographical expression than "Dimetia." But there seems to be no doubt that Dimetia was used very often as an equivalent expression for *all* South Wales. In Nicholas Trivet (see Spelman's "Concilia," p. 112, ed. 1639), there is mention of "Margaducus Rex Dimetiæ," or "Australis Walliæ." In a note appended to a Genealogical Roll (Ashmolean MSS. Bodleian) in Edwardian days, King Egbert is said to have been the first to exact submission of both the West Saxons and Dimetæ (Dimetis subditis). This would mean more than "Pembroke and part of Carmarthen." Giraldus Cambrensis, who lived in the twelfth century, and was himself a native of Pembroke, wrote, in his "Liber Primus Cambriæ descriptionis": "Divisa est antiquitus Wallia in tres partes . . . Venedotiam, scilicet quæ nunc est Nord Wallia id est Borealis Wallia dicitur: Demetiam, vel Sud Walliam, id est Australem Walliam quæ Britannici Deheubarth id est dextralis pars dicitur (see also Asser for Deheubarth); Powisiam quasi mediam et orientalem." In Chapter iv of the same work Giraldus says that the "curia principalis" of South Wales was "antiquitus apud urbem Legionis," *i.e.* at Caer Leon in Monmouth, but, later on, at Dinevor, *i.e.* Dinas Vawr, the great palace. In the annotations

on Chapter iv, by that learned Welshman, David Powell (1804), we read: *Post autem eversionem imperii Britannici regia sedes regni Dimetici ab urbe Legionum Maridunum translata est, ubi mansit usque ad ingressum Normannorum in insulam.* The capital was transferred to Carmarthen, *i.e.* Maridunum.

According therefore to Giraldus and his Welsh annotator, David Powell, and, it might be added such authorities as Humfrey Lloyd and Sir John Doddridge (1714), and others, it might well be maintained that the "*Demetica regio*," whence the Danes issued in A.D. 878 upon their well-known attack, included much more than Mr. Stevenson's "*Pembrokeshire and part of Carmarthenshire.*" The "*regio*" was in fact opposite the coasts of North Somerset and in easy touch with the upper Severn waters. Dean Milman, in his "*History of Latin Christianity*" (vol. iii, p. 273), adopts the view that King Alfred was in his youth anointed or crowned "*King of Demetia*" by Pope Leo IV, whatever this function meant, during his father's lifetime. Would this mean only "*Pembrokeshire and part of Carmarthenshire*"? The title and honour would be meaningless unless they covered South Wales from Caer Leon and Monmouth westwards. Again, was the "*Demetian Code*" confined to Pembroke and Carmarthen only? And was not Morgan, the "*Demetia regulus*," a chieftain of Glamorgan? Yet Mr. Stevenson says ("*Athenæum*," June 13, 1908), "*Monmouth was never part of it*," *i.e.* of Demetia. The fact is these geographical expressions were never the result of exact survey or of long and well-defined use, in those remote times. It is more than probable that the *reguli* of Gwent were described as chiefs of Dimetia.

DUMNONIA (DUFFNEINT OR DEUNON).

In the same way Dumnonia seems to have extended not only over what we mean by Devonshire proper, but also over North Somerset as far as the mouth of the river Parret, if not to the Axe and the adjacent moors. We can agree with Prebendary Earle when in his monograph on King Alfred's Jewel (p. 109) he says: "*Pedrida was regarded as a natural limit, like the sea itself, dividing nations.*" Florence of Worcester in his Chronicle has the following passage showing that he understood Watchet, *i.e.* the old Saxon Wecet, once a town of importance, and boasting a mint in Saxon days, as lying in Devonshire. The entry runs thus:

"A.D. 997. The Danish army, which had remained in England, sailed round West Saxony, entered the mouth of the river Severn and ravaged sometimes North Wales, sometimes Cornwall and then Watchet in Devonshire, burning many vills and slaying a multitude of men."

"The *Sumurtunensis paga*" used by Asser meant the region and district of Somerton, first colonised and ruled by the Saxons coming from the south coast, and Somerton was the royal centre of the first "*Sea-moor-settlers.*" The present North Somerset and the littoral strip adjoining the Severn sea was still regarded as the land of the sea-faring *Dumnonii*, and consisted of a mountainous and hilly enclave. At what time the present boundary between North Somerset and North Devon was fixed is not

altogether clear. But judging from the Exmoor perambulations (see Greswell's "Forests and Deer Parks of Somerset") the line seems to have been determined by some old forest associations. It could never have been a clear ethnical or race frontier. No, the Parret seems to have been the real frontier and the Castle of Cynuit (Comwich) lay just within it. It was, therefore, with good reason that "Odda, Dux provinciæ Defenum" commanded at Cynuit. All this agrees with the statement of Claudius Ptolemaeus (A.D. 150) who calls Uxella a town of the Dumnonii. This Uxella is Axbridge (Müller's Ed. of Ptolemy) and Ptolemy would therefore extend Dumnonia even a little further eastward to the site of the present Weston-super-Mare, including the old Dumnonian fortress of Worlebury Camp.

In former days there existed a very ancient "Bedelleria East of Parret" and a "Bedelleria West of Parret," lasting as a kind of nominal office handed on from father to son under the Crown up to Tudor days and having its origin in some military arrangement. It is difficult to account for as it appears to have existed before the Hundreds and to have been independent of them and the sheriffs. In A.D. 894 King Alfred collected troops from every town "east of the Parret as well as west of Selwood," and inflicted a defeat upon the Danes at Buttington, on the banks of the Severn, proving the recognized limit of the East of Parret in his day (A. S. Chronicle). In the Rotuli Hundredorum, Ed. I, Will. le Bret, a Mohun sub-tenant, is the "Ballivus de W. de Peret." Ibidem, a Joh. de la Lynde and a Walter de la Lynde have the "Bedeleriam de West de Peret by gift of the King." In the Calendar of Patent Rolls, May 1, 1311, there is an allusion to the Bailiwick and Serjeanty of east side of Parret. In 22 Ed. III Philip de Welleslegh held "the Serjeanty of the Bailiwick of East Peret," and this was also held in 12 Ed. IV by Cecilia, wife of Thomas Keryel (Calendarium Inq. p.m.), and in 13 Henry VI by John Hill or Hull (Collinson's "History of Somerset," iii, p. 405). Indeed, the river seems to have originally marked the ancient limits of the Archdeaconry of Taunton. In an Eton College charter there is a confirmation by Robert, Bishop of Bath, of grants to S. Andrew's Church, Stoke-Courcy, and amongst the witnesses appears "Hugh de Tournay, Archdeacon of beyond Parret" (c. 1150). By a curious act of inadvertence, which may possibly have arisen from some idea that the boundaries of North Somerset and North Devon were further east than they really are, Sir William Dugdale describes Stoke-Courcy's alien Priory as lying in Devonshire (Epitome of the Monasticon, 1693). To this day many people will speak of Exmoor as in Devon. As late as the reign of Charles I, Endymion Porter, the favourite of that king, asked for Simonsbath, in the Forest of Exmoor, as a perquisite for himself, and describes it as being "within Devon," *i.e.* Celtic Dumnonia. Sir Henry Spelman in his Catalogue of Royal Forests, c. 1670, places Exmoor in Devon (see his Glossary "Forestæ.") One enthusiastic writer in the "Archæologia Cambrensis" (vol. x, fourth series, p. 259), claims for the Celtic or Waelas allies of King Alfred a large share in his victories, and perhaps truly so. In Warrington's "History of Wales" (vol. i, p. 215), we read: "King Alfred engaged in his service many

Welshmen acquainted with the art of ship-building, whom he appointed superintendents of his dockyards and afterwards employed in honourable positions in his fleet." This is an early notice of the prowess of the sailors of Devon, who were no doubt recruited from the North as well as from the South Coast.

If we study carefully the Somerset Domesday we shall find that the very first place mentioned under "Terra Regis" is Summerstone, the capital of course of the Sea-moor-settlers. This and the Forest of Cheddar, *i.e.* Mendip, appear closely together. Then North and South Petherton are linked in a forest arrangement with Summerton. Then comes the entry: "Rex tenet Willetone et Candetone et Carentone. Nunquam geldaverant nec scitur quot Hidæ ibi sint." The grouping of these three Hundreds stretching from the mouth of the Parret to Exmoor is remarkable. Here is a separate block of littoral. Again, it is a significant fact that there was only one sheriff for Dorset and Somerset for centuries after Domesday, *i.e.* up to 1566, giving us the impression of an early grouping of South Somerset with Dorset, *i.e.* Summerton with Dorchester. In itself this is a confusion of shires for administrative purposes. We must remember also that Ethelwerd, the Chronicler, speaks of the Bishopric of Aldhelm as "Provincia quæ vulgo Seluudscire (Selwoodshire) dicitur."

From the above remarks it may be reasonably inferred that this section of "ancient Dumnonia" was really a somewhat separate and distinctive portion apart from the first settlements of the Sea-moor-saetas round Somerton. It is contained practically in three large Hundreds, viz.: Cannington, Williton, and Carhampton, all Royal Hundreds and part of the "Vetus Domincum" of the Saxon princes. At Domesday these Hundreds contained many "vasta" or wastes. The name Williton is conjectured to mean the ton of the "Waelas," and there are other places like it, such as Willsnek, *i.e.* Waelas nek on the Quantocks (a derivation endorsed by E. A. Freeman), Willet, Willscombe, etc. King Alfred ruled here amongst the "Waelas-cynne," as he calls them in his will. The old border fortresses seem to have been Hamdon, Montacute or Logdaresburg (some of it given to Athelney by King Alfred), Castle Neroche, and then Taunton. When the Dunster barony (also a great Honor) was erected after the Conquest, the Mohuns were given wreckage and shore-rights from the borders of Exmoor to a point near the mouth of the Parret. Indeed, William Mohun with his "jura regalia" at the time of the Conquest and Dunster Castle as his fortress, seemed to be lord paramount over West Somerset, and ruler of a small county Palatine (see Rawle's "Exmoor," and "Dunster and its Lords," by Sir H. Maxwell Lyte) distinct in itself.

Not only were these three western Hundreds distinctive as far as maritime territory was concerned, but they were wider, larger, and showing proofs of subsequent addition. They are somewhat unlike the smaller Hundreds, as they were distributed round Somerton. The sea alone differentiated them and brought a new influence. Curiously enough the Mohun shore rights still exist and belong now to the Luttrells of Dunster Castle. It might be added also that the Church dedications from Culbone (S. Colum-

banus), Porlock (S. Dubricius), Carhampton (S. Carantacus), St. Decumans, the mother Church of Watchet, all betray a special Celtic origin, linking North Somerset in its sea history rather with the opposite coast of Wales and Devon than with South and Mid Somerset. To this day the inhabitants of the Brendon Hills, Croydon Hills, and Exmoor, all betray certain peculiarities of dialect and race, differing from the lowlands and the marsh country. Everything points to the fact that North Somerset up to the River Parret was, ethnically, a prolongation of ancient Dumnonia.

It must be remembered, also, that the earliest charter of Ynys Witrin, or the sea monastery of Glastonbury, was given by a Rex Dumnoniæ, who may well have been a maritime prince supreme along the estuaries of the Parret, Brue, and Axe. Mr. W. H. Stevenson doubts the authenticity of this charter, and criticises Dr. Guest, and calls the expression "Ynys Witrin" ridiculous. But is there anything ridiculous in calling an island "Vitrea," from its colour (see "Forcellinus.") Vitrum means "wood" as well as "glass," and the green uplifted mound of Glastonbury seen through the mists, often conveys the notion of a light-green colour. But is there no evidence of Glastonbury manors lying in Dumnonia or Devonshire? Mr. W. H. Stevenson ("Athenæum," Oct. 5, 1907), states that there is no written proof that Devonshire extended to the Parret, still less that it went eastwards of it. I maintained otherwise. Mr. Stevenson quotes Domesday, and so do I. And may I refer him to the Exeter Domesday, and turn his attention to the heading (p. 148), "Terra Abbatis Glast. in Devenesira." Amongst the manors there enumerated he will find such Polden manors as Shapwick, Cossinton, Sowi (Middlezoy and West Zoyland), Chilton, and Edington itself. Mr. Stevenson will notice that the above manors enumerated in this Exeter Domesday as lying "in Devenesira," are all east of the River Parret. Now, I should be glad if Mr. Stevenson will explain this fact. Is the Exon. Domesday heading erroneous? In a letter to the "Athenæum," dated 18 April, 1908, I questioned whether "shires" were immutably fixed in King Alfred's time as they stood now, and said, "I fancy not," giving as one illustration the mention of "Triconshire" in King Alfred's will, which, of course, does not mean "Cornwall" as we now understand it. I might also have given "Selwoodshire" as another instance. Mr. Stevenson thought fit to sneer at my "fancy," but this is not argument. Possibly my "fancy" may be nearer the truth than some of his laboured philological deductions. We have had enough philology and to spare: now let us have some geography. The study of military campaigns requires this.

For the discussion of the whole campaign of A.D. 878 the reader is referred to the "Athenæum" for August 18, 1906; for September 15, 1906; for June 22, 1907; for August 10, 1907; for September 7, 1907; for April 18, 1908; for June 13, 1908; for October 24, 1908. Perhaps the best thing, failing Oxford research, is to call in a German Professor. We want a Pauli or a Lappenberg to fix the strategy of this Alfred campaign once and for all. It seems we cannot look to Oxford! We must go to Germany, I suppose!

APPENDIX B.

Athelney Abbey.

THE history of Athelney Abbey is given in Dugdale's "Monasticon," in its own registers (Somerset Record Society), in the *Proceedings* of the Somerset Archæological Society, vols. xxi and xliii, and elsewhere, but a few notes on points not mentioned or not sufficiently emphasized in connection with this great memorial Abbey may be of interest here. The variations of the place-name itself are numerous, viz.: Adelligeney, Adheligeney, Adheligney, Alegney, Aligney, Alingeneia, Alingeney, Alingney, Atelnye, Atheleney, Athelnye, Athelneye, Athelyngney, Athelingia, Aethelingæg, Aedlingeeg, Adelingi, and Adelingys, Aliennia (Domesday), etc. It really seems to be derived from two Saxon words, Aetheling—aigga, or eyot, *i.e.* the island of the nobles, called also "clitonum insula." We first hear of it as being the hermitage of S. Egelwine, or Athelwine, the son of King Kynegilsus, and brother of King Kenwalch. Kenwalch drove the Waelas or Britons to the mouth of the Parret after a battle at Pen Selwood in A.D. 658 (A.S. Chronicle), and was therefore the first conqueror of the Waelas here. Ethelwine was a hermit in the early days of Christian evangelization, as this region of Somerset could only have just been conquered by the Saxons.

In "A Memorial of British Piety" (1761), S. Egelwin is described as a Confessor (*fidei*), patron of the Abbey of Athelney, and noted for many miracles. He was commemorated November 29, and was a saint "continually afflicted with sickness, but this hindered him not from a fervent application of his soul to the love and service of God." The early dedication of Athelney was to S. Saviour (*salvator*), S. Peter, S. Paul, and S. Athelwine. The Feast of Dedication was first December 20, then August 30. At the Dissolution, seven hundred years after the foundation of the Abbey, one of the monks was called Athelwine. To King Alfred the spot itself, apart from its safe seclusion and welcome solitudes, may have recommended itself by these pious associations already two hundred years old. Remote chapels and oratories appealed to King Alfred, like the Cornish chapel of S. Guerir, where Asser says he worshipped when hunting. Apparently, Athelney was not a Benedictine Abbey to begin with. The first abbot was a foreigner, John of Saxony, and a philosopher, "acerrimi ingenii." It may be that King Alfred did not sympathise very much with the Benedictines. Certainly he never was canonised by Rome,

a very significant fact to which Sir John Spelman draws our attention.

With Glastonbury in utter ruins close by, it is a matter of surprise that King Alfred did not restore it. But there is no recorded gift made by the King to Glastonbury of any *notable* kind, no land charter, no confirmation of privileges (see John of Glastonbury and Adam of Domerham). What he gave in this region he bequeathed of his own demesne to Athelney.

Athelney, although honoured by King Canute as a "*famossima familia*" in 1017, was never a very rich foundation. William of Malmesbury (*c.* 1140), a Somerset monk, gives this account of it: "Athelney is not an Island of the sea, but is so inaccessible on account of bogs and the inundations of the lakes, that it cannot be approached but by a boat. It has a very large wood of alders, which harbours stags, wild goats (roe-buck?), and other beasts. The firm land, which is only two acres in extent, contains a little monastery and dwellings for monks. The founder was King Alfred, who, being driven over the country by the Danes, spent some time here in secure privacy. Here in a dream S. Cuthbert appearing to him and giving him assurance of his restoration he vowed that he would build a monastery to God" (termed a *monasteriolum* in the charter). "Accordingly he erected a Church, moderate indeed as to size, but as to construction singular and novel. For four piers, driven into the ground, support the whole fabric, four circular chancels being erected round it. The monks are few in number and indigent, but they are sufficiently compensated for their poverty by the tranquility of their lives and their delight in solitude." The site of Athelney was much like that of its neighbour, Muchelney Abbey, founded by Saxon princes, some say by King Ina, King Alfred's ancestor, whose name still lives in South Petherton, Taunton, and Wells. Sir John Spelman, in his "*Life of King Alfred*," reminds us that the King spent on Athelney and Shaftesbury one-eighth of his royal income, which proves his partiality to these foundations. But rich endowments never fell to Athelney in subsequent times, and the neighbouring Abbey of Glastonbury, restored by the great Benedictine monk, Dunstan, very soon overshadowed it. At Athelney it was difficult to get stone, and the original church of which Sir John Spelman suggests a plan, with the apsidal chapels or "*cancelli*" round it (p. 131), was probably all of wood. Possibly the piers were driven into a marshy spot, raising the primitive structure above occasional floods. The wood of alders, especially suited for foundations in a lagoon or moist place, may have been used. In the exhumed Glastonbury Lake Village, alder fascines were largely used for foundations, as, we believe, was the case in early Venice. The site was certainly lonely. To the north-east rose Borough Mump, King Alfred's Toteyate; to the east the Aller hills; to the south, Stoke S. Gregory; to the west, Ling, about three-quarters of a mile distant; to the north and north-west the old Park and Forest of North Petherton.

In A.D. 1321 Bishop Drokenesford made the following entry in his Register, dated Kingsbury, 3 Kal. July: "The Bishop to his officials, Archdeacons, Deans, Rectors. The Conventual Church of Athelney is ruinous; no funds for repair; allow the monks to

plead their case in Church on Holy Days after Gospel, assuring contributors (if contrite) of 30 days indulgence from enjoined penances in addition to any other authorised indulgences."

The wooden structure of King Alfred was no doubt replaced at some date by a stone-built Church and a more imposing Benedictine aisle. But these early wooden Churches were doubtless long in use. The "*ligna basilica*" of Glastonbury, *i.e.* S. Joseph's Chapel, was standing in A.D. 1032, when King Canute confirmed the charter of privileges there (Spelman's "*Concilia*," p. 537). And, like Glastonbury's oldest Church, it may have been more like a real "*basilica*." The Athelney Church is said to have been on the north-east side of the island. Bishop Godwin, son of Bishop Godwin of Bath and Wells, writes thus, in his well-known book, "*De Præsulibus*" (c. 1610): "In the place where this Denewulf (Bishop of Winchester) dwelt, King Alfred built a monastery, the walls whereof are still standing." In a letter written to J. Aubrey (*pene* W. Stoate, Burnham), Athelney ruins were being dug down Oct. 5, 1674: "They continue digging up the foundation of that sometime famous Abbey." Some of the stones and slabs were being fitted into the adjoining buildings, probable the farm house. The owner at that date was "the unfortunate Captain Hucker," unfortunate we suppose because he held Church property.

When Athelney was surrendered it fell into the possession of Sir John Tuchett, Lord Audley, for £20 (S.A.P., vol. xliii, p. 159). Abbot Gasquet supposes this Lord Audley to have been the well-known Chancellor, Thomas, Lord Audley, of Audley End, but this is a mistake (see Greswell's "*Land of Quantock*," p. 182). The John Tuchett, or Touchet, was the descendant of the well-known family who held for centuries the barony of Nether Stowey (see also Archbold's "*Religious Houses*."). The site of the Abbey was granted to John Clayton, 17 Aug., 1544, who died Nov. 3 of the same year. He alienated it to John Tynbury (Brown's Wills). With regard to this property Thomas Hugo quotes Archbishop Whitgift's saying to Queen Elizabeth that "Church lands were like a moth fretting a garment," and brought a curse with them. The old seal of the Abbey represents our Saviour bearing on his left arm a mound, or plot, surmounted with a staff and a cross, alluding to the Isle of Athelney itself as the little ark of salvation, or perhaps Borough Mump, King Alfred's Toteyate.

Amongst the early possessions of the Abbey, from its foundation to the days of Edward the Confessor, was the manor of Biscopeston, a large manor of nine hides, afterwards the site of the famous castle of Montacute, the Norman administrative centre of Somerset. The old name of Montacute was Leodgaresburg, and here, according to one tradition, Joseph of Arimathea was buried. Here, in Canute's time, was found that flint crucifix together with such relics as a small cross, a bell, and a text of the Gospels. This was the crucifix taken by the kine of Tofig, the sheriff, to Waltham Holy Cross, in Essex, before which Harold prayed the day before the fateful battle of Senlac. It was this crucifix that gave Harold's men their war-cry. Leodgaresburg, or Biscopeston (Bishopston), must have had sacred and

peculiar traditions in King Alfred's time, and perhaps the associations prompted the gift. The place must always have been a stronghold at a very early date, and the chief's name appeared on the well-known Glastonbury Pyramids. When the Earl of Moretain was established at Montacute (a new name brought from Normandy), he got the Athelney monks to take in exchange for Biscopeston the manor of Purse-Candel, in Dorset, apparently a very bad exchange for the Abbey.

There was one romantic little possession held by the monks of Athelney in the remote combes of the Quantocks, and this was Adcombe, in the parish of Over Stowey. This was given to them by King Ethelred, who was lord of the Quantocks, then part of the Saxon Royal Forest, and it contributed to the kitchen of the monks. No doubt many Quantock red deer found their way to the distant home of the monks. Adcombe is linked in the old documents with Hamme, or Hamp, near Bridgwater, but the reason is not very apparent, as the places are wide apart. The monks had property on the Southern slopes of the Quantocks, viz. at Oggesole, Clavelshey, or Classey, and not far from the old Glastonbury property of West Monckton, described in Kentwine's charter as "*juxta famosam silvam Cantucudu*" (A.D. 682).

In their immediate vicinity the Athelney monks fared well as far as their sustenance went. There was plenty of salmon to be caught in the Parret and the Tone of a most excellent kind: their fishponds or "*vivaria*" were full of toothsome eels. The River Parret was always noted for its wonderful migration of eelers. Old folk still talk of the "*Blue Valsens*," a kind of eel. The moors in their vicinity were full of winged game. Indeed, few places were more noted for the number and variety of waterfowl that filled this district, even up to modern times. For firewood they had eighty acres of alder wood (*alneti*) in Curry Moor, and plenty of pasturage for their stock in the moors, meads, and hams, and especially a meadow with the suggestive name of "*la Hoc mede*," in Ling. Ling manor belonged to them, with its court and two "*laghdayes*" every year.

The modern Island of Athelney has been thus described by Thomas Hugo: "It is situated on the north side of Stanmoor, in the Parish of East Lyng, and is about four miles south-west of the town of Bridgwater. It lies on the north bank of the Tone, about one mile above the confluence of that river with the Parret, on the outside, therefore, and not, as frequently supposed, between those streams. It consists of an island of two low eminences, divided by a shallow depression which is, nevertheless, some feet above the vast level that stretches round on every side. The island is composed of red marl and is 24 acres in extent, $11\frac{1}{2}$ being the complement of the eastern and slightly higher eminence, which was occupied by the monastery and $12\frac{1}{2}$ that of its fellow. It is still not unfrequently an island in fact as well as in name, though furnished with a high embankment between it and the river, and has to be reached by boats during the months of usual winters. On the eastern eminence is a pleasant farmhouse erected about 80 years ago, generally backed by a goodly group of hayricks and wheat mows. Above it is a white obelisk with an inscription erected by Sir John Slade, a former owner (A.D. 1801).

The river is crossed by a bridge of wood, similar to many that still adorn the picturesque river which flows beneath. But the eye looks in vain for any indications of the ancient glories of the place. Luxuriant crops wave on the gently-swelling eminence, but of the graceful structure which once crowned it not one stone remains *in situ* to make us conscious of the treasure which we have lost."

The place itself must have changed greatly in appearance since William of Malmesbury's days, when the "terra firma" covered only two acres. Can it be possible that these Somerset levels are rising gradually, geologically, like the coasts of Scandinavia, which in some places have risen seven feet in 150 years? When last there the writer saw a few worked stones lying about the place, but the probability is that most of them have been used to build the farmhouse and sheds, etc. In the Taunton Museum are a few mosaic tiles and other relics.

Athelney Abbey was connected closely with the Cathedral Church at Wells. In the charter of Savaric it was granted that, with the assent of the Dean and Chapter, the Abbot Benedict of Athelney and his successors should become Canons of Wells, holding the Prebend of Sutton, and that they should hold the stall next to the Sub-Dean. They were not bound to reside, but must provide a Vicar with four marcs as stall wages (Wells MSS.)

The Church of S. Cuthbert at Wells may be a reminder of King Alfred's reign. On the capitals of that Church is the sculptured martyrdom of S. Edmund of East Anglia, slain by Ingvar and Ubba, in A.D. 870. This sculpture may be, as Canon Church suggests in his "Chapters on Wells," a reproduction of the story found carved on the early Saxon Church. If so, the remark of Matthew Paris in his "Chronica Majora," that Ingvar and Ubba atoned for the blood, "beati regis et martyris Edmundi," before the castle of Cumwich, may have a local significance. It was about S. Cuthbert's Feast Day, 20 March, that success came to the king's forces there.

APPENDIX C.

Newton Court and Petherton Park.

IN the Parish of North Petherton there are two places called Newton, viz.: (1) North Newton, known anciently as Newton-Forestarium, Newton-Regis, Newton-Plecý, and Newton-Wrothe; (2) West Newton, known as Newton-Comitis, Newton-Hawys, and Newton-Ricardi. Both are recognizable to this day as separate places in the same parish, but the chief history attaches to North Newton, although there are very few signs now remaining of its past importance, especially as a hunting and administrative centre. The fact is that in early days North Petherton was of all the Royal Forests and Parks in Somerset by far the most important. This may be owing not simply to the

quantity of deer found there, but to its value as an oak forest, more valuable than Exmoor, for instance, in this respect, and also to the abundance of winged game found there. Here was a Paradise for the hawker and fowler of old.

North Petherton Park and Forest were linked also very closely with Somerton, the great Saxon centre. There was the "Home Park," if we may so term it, of Somerton, but North Petherton and the North Curry moors comprised the real sporting Forest of Somerton. Mendip was, of course, a favourite hunting centre with the Saxon princes, as we know from Axbridge documents, but North Petherton was closer and more accessible. Naturally the fowling on Mendip, or even Neroche, would be inferior to that on the lowlands. At the time of the Norman Conquest a Robert de Odborville holds (partly in succession to some existing Saxon arrangement), a kind of Forest Barony. The "membra" of this Barony were found on Exmoor, Cheddar, Holford on the Quantocks, and, in due course, formed part of the hereditary Forestership-in-Fee of Somerset, held by the great Mortimer family and by the Chaucers. This Barony or Forestership was attached technically to a tenement in North Petherton (Collinson, vol. iii), and the headquarters of Robert de Odborville was in North Petherton itself. The site of the old abode can still be traced.

When William the Conqueror held his famous Council at "Pedreda," and when Lanfranc, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Bishops, Abbots, Earls, and chiefs of all England were present, and the cause of Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester, was pleaded (Florence of Worcester), the meeting-place must have been either at North or South Petherton. Probably the hunting centre of North Petherton would have pleased King William best. In the Church of North Petherton a "King's Gallery" is still pointed out, used now for the tenants of North Petherton Park farms. But tradition has always linked it with the presence of a former king. In addition, Newton-Regis, or Newton-Forestarium, always had a King's Chapel or a Free Chapel. These historic links are interesting so far as they bring together Saxon and Norman, King Alfred and King William on common hunting ground. To this day the various outlying "membra" of the old Forestership can be traced in the land taxes which are levied on them, Newton Tything being the place where the old world payments are still made. For instance, there is a land tax of 17s. payable from a place called Newhall, in Holford parish, to this very day, "at fawning season." The "*Balliva Forestæ totius Somerset*," has been worked out in detail by myself in a "*History of the Forests and Deer Parks of Somerset*" (Barnicott & Pearce, Taunton, 1905). Mr. Eyton has suggested that the presence of the king's "hearth-keeper," "cook," "doorkeeper," "pincerna," "dapifer," "chamberlain," as well as the "*Parcarius*" and "*Accipitrarius*" and the "*Tres Forestarii*" (Domesday) of Somerset, as landholders near and in Petherton, point to the fact that King William probably held a court at Petherton. There is certainly no county in England with such an interesting and unique forest history as Somerset. It is worth the very closest attention from antiquaries, an attention that has never been sufficiently given.

The cowherd, or hogherd, the servant in the ballad of his master at Newton Court, whom King Alfred met in his wanderings, and at whose house the well-known episode of the cakes took place, was supposed by some to have been Denewulf, and this is the quaint account handed down by Bishop Godwin, son of a Bishop Godwin (1584), in his "De Præsulibus," and a sixteenth century version :

"This Denewulf, as the fame goeth, was sometimes a hoggeheard and dwelt in the place where the Abbey of Athelney in Summersetshire was afterwards builded. It happened at that time King Alfred (that famous King of the West Saxons) to bee so neere followed of the Danes (that sought nothing more than his life), as being abandoned of all his followers he knew no better nor more likely course for his safety than, dissembling his estate, to deliver himself for a while into the service of this hogheard, dwelling in a place at that time almost inaccessible for water and of very little or of no resort. So long he continued there as his master and dame were almost weary of his service, wherein he was not so ready as a man should that had had education accordingly. Of her it is particularly delivered that when the King let certain cakes burn that she had set him to toast, she reprehended him as an unprofitable servant in these words :

'Urere quos cernis panes girare moraris
Cum nimium gaudes hos maoducare calentes.'

(Translated).

'These cakes that burne
While them to turn
Yee make too little haste,
When drest they be
I warrant yee
Yo'wl eate them but too fast.'

"At last it fell out that the king's friends gathering themselves together, he joynded himselfe unto them and his subjects that now a great while thought him dead resorted unto him in great numbers, as setting upon the Danes he overthrew them and in a short time not only brought them under his obedience, but also in a manner reduced the whole Realme of England into one monarchy. Having thus recovered the peaceable possession of his crown, hee was not unmindful of his old master, in whom perceiving an excellent sharpness of wit, he caused him, though it were now late being a man growne, to study, and having attained some competency of learning he preferred him to the Bishopricke of Winchester. Moreover, that he might shew himself thankful unto God as well as man, in the place where this hogheard dwelt, he built a monastery, the walls whereof are still standing."

William of Malmesbury narrates how King Alfred when in happier circumstances was accustomed to relate in a lively and agreeable manner his perils at Athelney and how he escaped them by the merits of S. Cuthbert.

APPENDIX D.

OLD BALLAD.

*King Alfred and the Shepherd, with the humours of
Gillian, the shepherd's wife.*

IN this Ballad, reprinted with others by Thomas Evans (A.D. 1784) from rare copies and MSS., there is a somewhat different form of the cake story. The motive is also different. King Alfred undertakes his errand in disguise in order to amuse himself with the rustics. But the locality of Newton Court is interesting.

In elder times that were of yore
When gibes of churlish glee
Were used among our country carls
Tho' no such thing now be.
The which King Alfred liking well,
Forsook his stately court,
And in disguise unknown went forth
To see that jovial sport.

He carries with him "a buckler good and strong" to give Jack Sauce a rap, and presently, "coasting through Somersetshire,"

Near Newton Court he met
A shepherd swain of lusty limb
That up and down did jet.

The shepherd was carrying a leather scrip with much good meat therein, and the king challenges him for its possession. Nothing abashed, the shepherd takes up the challenge.

"Thou seem'st to be some sturdy thief
And mak'st me sore afraid
Yet if thou wilt thy dinner win,
Thy sword and buckler take :
And, if thou can'st into my scrip
Therewith an entrance make.

"Here stands my bottle, here my bag,
If thou can'st win them, roister,
Against thy sword and buckler here
My sheep-hook is my master.

They set-to and have a long round lasting four hours.

And wearied both, with right good will
Desired each other's stay,
"A truce, I crave," quoth Alfred then,
"Good shepherd hold thy hand ;
A sturdier fellow than thyself
Lives not within the land."

King Alfred discloses himself as "a gentleman well known in good King Alfred's Court."

"The devil thou art the shepherd said,
Thou goest in rags all torn,
Thou seem'st rather I think to be
Some beggar basely born.

But if he would mend his ways and be a shepherd,

At night to Gillian my sweet wife
Thou shalt go home with me.

He promises him good store of "whig and whey," a good "pease-straw fire,"

And now and then good barley cakes
As better days require.

His master was "chief and lord of Newton Court," and gave his shepherd swains curds and clouted cream of red-cows' morning milk.

Thus if thou wilt my man become,
This usage thou shalt have :
If not, adieu ! go hang thyself,
And so farewell ! sir knave."

King Alfred fell in with the suggestion, and agreed to be his man at ten groats a year, which the shepherd deemed good wage.

"For did the king himself," quoth he,
"Unto my cottage come,
He should not, for a twelve-months' pay,
Receive a greater sum."

The shepherd and King Alfred go home, but Gillian was not at all pleased to see the latter.

"A fellow, I doubt, will cut our throats
So like a knave looks he."

The king tries to re-assure her.

"My master hired me for ten groats
To serve you one whole year :
So, good Dame Gillian, grant me leave
Within your house to stay.
For, by St. Anue, do what you can
I will not yet away."

Then follows the story of the cakes.

Where lying on the hearth to bake,
By chance the cake did burn,
"Why can'st thou not, thou lout (quoth she)
Take pains the same to turn.
Thou art more quick to take it out,
And eat it up half dough,
But serve me such another trick
I'll thwack thee on the snout."

The threatened violence of Dame Gillian in the Ballad rather agrees with old William Woodland's oral tradition that she did "catch him a clout on the side of the head."

However, King Alfred carries on the farce a little longer, and went to sleep in the upper room amongst the cackling hens.

And o'er his head hang'd spider's webs
As if they had been bells.

In the morning he got up early at cock-crow.

Then up got Alfred, with his horn
And blew so long a blast
That it made Gillian and her groom
In bed feel sore aghast.
"Arise," quoth she, "we are undone :
This night we lodged have
All unawares, within our house,
A false dissembling knave.
Rise, husband, rise : he'll cut our throats :
He calleth for his mates :
I'd give, old Will, our good cade lamb,
He would depart our gates."

The cade lamb was the lamb that was weaned from its mother
and brought up by hand about the house.

But still King Alfred blew his horn
Before them more and more :
Till that an hundred lords and knights
All lighted at the door :
Who cry'd "All hail ! All hail ! good king !
Long have we sought your grace.
And here you find (my merry men all !)
Your sovereign in this place."

Gillian and her groom were now horror-struck at the turn
events had taken, and anticipated nothing less than the halter
"for using thus our good King Alfred."

"O pardon, my liege," quoth Gillian then
"For my husband and for me !
By these ten bones, I never thought
To see what now I see,"
"And by my hook," the shepherd said
(An oath both good and true)
"Before this time, O noble king,
I ne'er your highness knew,
Then pardon me and my old wife
That we may after say
When first you came into our house
It was a happy day."

Of course the king pardons them and, in addition, because the
shepherd had made such good play with his hook against his
sword and buckler, he bestowed upon him one thousand wethers
and enough pasture-ground as would suffice to feed them all.

"And this thy cottage I will change
Into a stately hall."

"And for the same, as duty binds,"
The shepherd said, "Good king
A milk-white lamb, once every year,
I'll to your highness bring.
And Gillian, my wife, likewise,
Of wool to make you coats
Will give you as much at New Year's tide
As shall be worth ten groats."

"And in your praise my bagpipes shall
Sound sweetly once a year,
How Alfred, our renowned king
Most kindly hath been here."

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